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THE SMART SET

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Gertrude Atherton

will contribute to THE SMART SET for September the opening chapters of the last novel she will write for some years to come. So important was this long story considered by the editor that it was deemed wise to deviate from the magazine's policy and publish it in two parts; the second installment will appear in October. Do not fail to read "The Gorgeous Isle" in the

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THE MART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

Vol. XXV

AUGUST, 1908

No. 4

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THE DIARY OF AN UNCONSCIOUS EVE

By G. Vere Tyler

I

WHEN I advertised for a secretary to come abroad with me, it never occurred to me that any but women would apply. I had meant women in my own mind when I wrote my advertisement, and I expected women would respond. Many did, of course, but countless young men also, and among them Ferdinand. It was perfectly natural, I suppose, considering myself generally, my temperament and indifference to the world's opinion, that having once seen Ferdinand I should engage him, because besides being an almost perfect expression of beautiful youth, I could see in a flash that he was clever, alert, tactful, with a kind of controlled enthusiasm in his eyes that suggested—I can't exactly define why—genius.

If one must have a secretary, I easily argued, why not an interesting companion as well? And so with very little ceremony the whole thing was arranged.

Ferdinand brought with him letters of reference which I declined to examine. He seemed a person to whom the consideration of references was rather an affront. His voice, gestures, speech and manner proclaimed him a creature of refinement and cultivation; a gentleman, in fact, and that seemed to me to suffice.

This blond, saint-like fellow, who at times momentarily only seems seven and at others forty, alarms me. He is frail and of a spiritual cast of counte-

nance, reminding one, indefinitely, of a Shelley or a Keats, and while possessed of cheerful and hopeful vigor, often speaks with conviction of a short life. He appears to cling hard to ideals and carries with him the impression of one who holds very sacred the things taught him at his mother's knee, and yet withal he is worldly. He has just been in, and in answer to my question confirmed my impression that he is twenty-five years old. When I looked at him I discovered that he is not blond, but a beautiful symphony in light brown, all shades of this charming color being reflected in hair, eyes and complexion. He is clean-shaven. The eyes, large and expressive, are hazel, and oftener a clear amber in tint rather than gray. When they are gray they are coldly intellectual; when they are yellow, Autumn itself seems reflected in them; and one gazes softened and spell-bound as into the depths of a clear, quiet, isolated lake. His nose is perhaps his best feature, his chin narrows slightly and he has the mouth of a virgin. He is tall and slender, graceful as a studied society actor, but while mentally posing him, as a kind of self-gratification, in salons or tapestry-hung studios, the mind strays to narrow boats which he rows energetically or cleared fields in which he is fleet. He dresses well, affecting grays and tans and, while he costumes himself unaffectedly, there is a certain style in the cut of his things, their easy, loose carelessness, that is literary in effect and that attracts attention to him.

During the week he attends strictly to my every wish—and I have a good many—but on Sundays, seeming to claim that day for his own, he shuts himself in his room and I have known him on certain of these occasions not to issue forth even for food until midnight. A certain loneliness that I have to experience during these absences is the nearest approach Ferdinand has come to not pleasing me. But he certainly has a right to his Sundays, since he claims it. Yesterday, however, dreading the time on my hands and seeing the people opposite pouring into a theatre, I ventured to knock on his door and insist upon his going over with me. He hesitated, demurred, but in the end yielded. I had no religious compunctions, feeling that Ferdinand's Sunday retirements were a question of selfish indulgence rather than religious contemplation. But when we entered the blazing, crowded place I felt that I was leading a lamb from green fields into a market-place. I have, however, grown used to dismissing such poetic reflections. If this was wrong, so was life, for life never fails to lead the lamb to the market-place. With the lamb it is the end; with the young man it is the beginning.

The play we saw, a typical Continental affair, was an exhibition of exquisitely formed women amid beautiful scenes and clothed, or partly clothed, in delicate fabrics, some resembling the silver gentleness of the moon, others the gorgeous splendor of the sun. The pictures presented were daring, audacious and sensational; yet the charming girls selected for these suggestive situations and flashed upon the eye and senses through all intoxicating colors from pale violet to blood-red, had the appearance of angels. In spite of my worldliness, I am still possessed of the Puritan blood of my forefathers, and I experienced something like a shock, partly on account of Ferdinand's presence. But I had no regrets. I have ceased to have regrets about that which is satisfying, and to be surprised I count an indebtedness to the gods. When one scene representing a cave of

gold which opened and revealed fifty or more girls in filmy gauze sitting and lying about or standing in a flood of palpitating yellow, I allowed the beauty of it all to penetrate me pleasantly, quite indifferent to the moral effect of such things upon the world at large; for I no longer love the world, but myself. I forgot Ferdinand, but finally remembering, I glanced at him.

I scarcely recognized him for the strange new beauty that had come into his countenance. The yellow glare from the stage fell upon him and his cheeks were burned into a dull red, while his eyes, as though a smoldering furnace glowed beneath the quiet lake, were on fire. Withal there was pathos and spiritual sadness—pain, I should say—the insufferable melancholy of a soul that has lost its bearings.

"Does this all affect you so?" I asked, feeling a little alarmed.

"As a part of my present environment, yes."

"Your present environment is—me."

"You are quite right," he answered.

"And that present environment—do you resent it?"

"I think," said Ferdinand, "that youth as it vanishes always waves its hand in swift regret."

"My friend," I said, speaking very gently, "you are right, but this should not sadden you. Life means change, and life means surrender. When a young girl marries, for instance, a great change comes into her life, and that change brings suffering; but the suffering is part of the new joy that is to follow. She learns to realize that, to give up her dreams of what she has lost, and begins to live in what she has gained. To part with one's youth is brutal, but none are exempt from that brutality—all part with youth. That is what you are suffering from; you are saying good-bye to your youth."

As I spoke the girls were circling about in a languid dance like bees and butterflies hovering among flowers.

"What do you feel this moment that my acquaintance with you has brought you—gain or loss?"

"Both," Ferdinand answered in a low voice; "both gain and loss. What the gain is and what the loss is I cannot say; perhaps change is a better word. I am changed."

"And the change saddens you?"

"It makes me afraid."

"Of me?"

This time Ferdinand laughed. "Oh, no, I am not afraid of you!"

"Then of what?"

"Of myself! When one feels a thousand sleeping devils within one stirring in their sleep—"

He broke off suddenly and we fixed our attention on the stage, which was in a pink flush where birds of paradise had been added to the scene.

II

A GLOOMY morning has dawned, but when one can keep the crimson damask curtains closed, awaken lazily in a downy and altogether delicious bed, turn on the electric lights and ring the bell for coffee, the gloom is dispelled. That is how I begin all my mornings; and then while the coffee is coming up I plunge into a perfumed bath of tepid water, take a cold shower and then get into the prettiest *négligée* that my idle time has conceived. When the tray arrives it is set before me, and thus I usually am when Ferdinand comes in with the letters and to discuss what I wish to do with the day—or rather what the day wishes to do with me. That is a very delightful hour, in my estimation, and only very recently has there entered into it any but the most proper spirit; and by proper one means commonplace. Quite naturally I have always read in Ferdinand's eyes that I was a delightful vision, but a vision certainly in which he was in no way associated. His eyes look their admiration, but back of the admiration lurks a curious inquiry that at times seems to me a prayer. I find that prayer interesting and should quite like to put it into words. I find Ferdinand interesting, but indefinitely so, just as one finds life interesting.

Ah! this great temporary gift of consciousness of self and the wonderful world, a world in which, too, there are charming, sensitive creatures like Ferdinand! What may we not have passed through for this hour of consciousness, what may we not have to pay for it? Well, whatever the price, this morning it is worth it; it is always worth the price to a woman when a man is falling in love with her. When he has fallen in love with her it is not so interesting, just as when the balloon or child's kite touches the ground the breathless interest and delicious anxiety are over. How graceful are the circumlocutions of the inflamed balloon of love! To see this filmy thing circle and play about, buoying itself by the slightest wind, with a full knowledge that its flamboyant effort must soon come to grief, is most inspiring. I fear at times that, so far as Ferdinand is concerned, that which I flatter myself by calling my correct deportment toward him is the blowing my breath upon the fragile balloon that before it falls helplessly it may continue to mount to amuse me. What a gratification of self, after all, are our good impulses; how delicious to me—what a rare sensation has been my effort to keep this young man immune to my charms!

III

We went about quite gaily yesterday after we left the theatre, the change that Ferdinand claims to have experienced having anything but a depressing effect on him. His cheeks remained flushed during the entire day, and his eyes shone. Very beautiful eyes they are, languid and liquid, trustful like a gazelle's, but with the animated intelligence of a spirited horse and the flash of the poet's genius. Yesterday the awakened passion in them enhanced their beauty and my interest. His mood manifested itself in gaiety which, when I analyzed it, I found was excitement. "Allow me to be your escort today!" he exclaimed, and insisted upon paying for things—the cab, the luncheon, the

flowers, and I reveled in that indescribable feeling that all women experience when the man reveals the impulse to spend money on her. We spent the afternoon in a dangerously sociable manner, but when the dinner hour arrived I reverted to the usual formality of our dining separately. This was cruel. I felt it as he lifted his hat to me at the dining-room door, and when he entered later and seated himself far from me in a distant corner of the room. Why did I do that? Why is a woman always cruel to love, I mean the real, sweet pure offering of the best that a man has to give? Is it not the blowing the breath on the inflated balloon to see it mount and sail about, as I have said, for her amusement? Poor young man! The day hours of yesterday were very happy; he felt himself, at least, in the position of a lover, and the night hours must have been very sad. I saw that they had been when he came in with the letters this morning; moreover, that they had been thoughtful hours. He was no doubt embarrassed and alarmed at the liberties he had taken and was quite determined to remember his position as my secretary. My cheerful greeting, my bright good morning, was formally met, and when he had given me my letters and received some instructions, he turned to go. But I was in a mood to be admired and toy with the balloon. The red closed curtains, my blue bath-robe, the electric light, the pretty china and silver in front of me made a picture that should not have come into existence for naught and that certainly should be converted into a fair wind that would mount the balloon.

"Sit down!" I exclaimed cordially, pointing to a chair near by.

Ferdinand remained quite rigid.

"I have some writing to do this morning," he replied; "letters to answer."

"Let them wait!" I said petulantly.

"They are important," he urged.

"Nonsense!" I returned.

He looked at me in grave silence, his fine eyes taking in, as I had intended they should, the enticing negligée appearance that I had arranged for his

benefit. My hair was down, my polished nails shone, the perfume of the water still clung to me. I felt myself charming and lovable—irresistible I might easily become. It was delightful to think these things, but I had no idea of putting my power over Ferdinand to the test. That idea was like the distant mountain-top viewed from the valley. Some day one might climb to it, reach it and stand triumphant, but today it was pleasant to cull the tiny wild-flowers in the grass about one's feet. I put out my hand for a rather brilliant blossom.

"I am all the things in a woman that you never dreamed would attract you, am I not, Ferdinand?"

He was silent. I think I shall always be able to see him, no matter how far he may some day be separated from me, as he stood in that moment beneath the shower of electric lights. He wore a clerically-cut blue cheviot sack suit and a white tie. His face was serious and determined; the purity of his young soul shone.

"Why do you not answer?" I asked, my eyes with their eager intent fixed on him. But he remained silent.

"You were talkative enough yesterday!" I presently exclaimed.

He flushed. "Shall I write the letter to Carruthers that you dictated yesterday?" he asked quietly.

"No, I am not interested in that. Have you had coffee?"

"Two hours ago."

"Will you have another cup with me?"

"Thank you, no."

"Then you may go."

He went; my momentary anger vanished and I lay back in my pillows and smiled. The efforts of the caught mouse are pathetic beyond words, and yet how few there are who do not watch the cruel by-play of the cat. I have often wondered at this and marveled that the owners of cats apparently triumph in the practice of this devilish cruelty. In the case of the cats, however, there is an end in view—that of getting rid of the mice, which are troublesome and destructive, but a woman's

cruelty with an ingenuous youth has no extenuation except its own delight.

I lay for a long while thinking on all these things, seeing this love-affair—as well name it and be done with it—psychologically, as an expression of nature, one of the steps in a man's life toward his development and toward his end. All these things occur to all men and then comes the end. He was not seeing it this way. Once I did not see it this way, but when one has lived, when one is almost tired of having lived, one can see things as part of a whole. I am no moralist, I could see no harm in allowing this young man each day and hour to fall more and more in love with me. One puts trousers on a little man for the first time with sadness. Mothers often weep over these first little trousers, but they are as much a part of the little man's life as his meals. And so in putting upon this young man his first garment of love I was preparing him for aches and sorrows, but these aches and sorrows must come, and through woman to all youth.

I dressed, still filled with these reflections, in the electric light, but finally I turned it off, drew back the curtains and looked out on the bustle and movement in the street. I felt a bit wearied and bored, but on glancing at my watch found it was twelve o'clock. My spirits went up. In one hour more I would be seated in a cozy restaurant surrounded by mirrors reflecting gay and wicked people and my eager interest in life would be renewed.

I drew the big plush arm-chair up to the window and continued to look out on the gay Brussels street. A woman went by in a motor. She was in black and wore chinchilla furs and had a splendid fur rug on her knees. She was alone and looked sad. Behind her came a droll wagon piled up with bundles of laundry. On the front seat were three bare-headed women. They wore shawls over their shoulders; they were not alone and they did not look sad. Life and its compensations! The cabs, all waiting to be hired, stood in line around a grand statue. At the foot of the statue flowers bloomed, and above

them water poured abundantly from the mouths of wild animals and naked women. Many vehicles passed, many people were in them, but I remember only with any vividness the woman in the sables with the black fur rug over her knees, who was sad, and the three bare-headed laundresses in shawls, who were not sad.

At last one o'clock arrived and I began to dress, sending Ferdinand ahead to make sure that our little table in the corner with mirrors at the back and on one side was reserved. Ah! what a delightful corner this special one is, with its mirrors reflecting bright lights and beautiful faces, and the waiters in their black and white garb, with their young assistants, pretty boys, impudent and charming, looking into women's eyes and men's pockets for tips. A particular one I recall who took pleasure in making himself attentive and who was quite conscious of his remarkable eyes and studied, graceful ways. He always gets a good tip, as though I must needs pay him for his beauty. But what a luncheon, in that small corner—ourselves, Ferdinand and I, but two flowers in a patch of human embroidery! We lunched as we always do at this particular place, St. Jean's Restaurant—all these places are Saint somebody—magnificently, as far as the cooking was concerned, and we had absinthe cocktails that came in tiny glasses with frosted sugar on the edges, and fine Moselle wine with dust on the bottles. And coffee! Ah! the black coffee at this place I can never forget. Black it is called, but red it is, as the eyes of a beautiful dog I once loved—brown and red are stimulating.

But withal, Ferdinand was reserved, and the tired look in his eyes went to my heart. I have seen it only in the eyes of famishing animals. He is very brave, this pure young fellow. He made no complaint, but the joyousness of yesterday was past, that joyousness born of a new excitement that caused him a sleepless night. He is sleeping now. He left me at my door, a dazed, haggard, but beautiful expression on his face.

"I must go and sleep," he said, smiling faintly.

How very sweet he must look lying on his pillows asleep! I know that he is asleep, for exhaustion was upon his countenance. Tonight we dine in a party and he will be present; silent, as it were effacing himself, and I shall not notice him and he will be jealous. His cheeks will burn and once or twice he will fix his eyes upon me and in them will be that exquisite and unconscious prayer.

And I shall enjoy that—all the suffering that I inflict upon him, and I will be reconciled, for I shall know that it is his development, his becoming a man that is tormenting him, while he will believe it is love. Love! I laugh as I put down that word, and yet while one believes in it it is the most exquisite emotion in the world. The really sad people in the world are those who have defined love—I am one of those. Dear Ferdinand, enjoy your suffering: such joy will never come to you again.

Ferdinand! I wonder why this name was given to him, what old ancestor—for this Ferdinand, poor and pure, has had ancestors—is being kept alive, at any rate in name. He speaks occasionally of his mother and two sisters. The mother is dead these five years; the sisters live in some old country town in Kentucky, with an aunt. He has no memory of his father.

What would be this Ferdinand to me did I not demand of him the strong, pure love of his youth? Perhaps not very much.

He may, after all, fall in love with some young girl and with his ideas he will marry. How bent he was upon young girls six months ago, how his eyes unconsciously followed them! How insipid they are to him today. A great red rose has bloomed in the midst of the daisy field. My sweet, sweet Ferdinand, sleep and dream, dream of young girls. Some day one may be your consolation. Now you are ashamed to think of them,

as though you had been given up to something trifling and quite unworthy of you. Ah! how beautiful is youth! I envy you, my young friend, the passionate hunger in your soul, the famished look in your eyes, the iciness of your hands or the fever in them, and your exhaustion and your exhausted sleep. Only the young and the pure in heart sleep as you are sleeping now. Your awakening will be a fresh drink, for I will give you my eyes to look into.

What fountains of intoxicating drink are my eyes! I can look up from this table to the mirrors opposite and see them—wonderful, placid and mysterious. Men have fallen down drunk for drinking from eyes like mine, and men have perished of too long drinking. The faces of women's victims rise up and terrify me, but the lights in the street outside are shining. The street scenes—the street scenes of Brussels, with its atmosphere of old and new—are going on, and a little later I shall ring and have the red damask curtains drawn, and more lights will flare in the room than the one on my table beneath the yellow shade by which I am writing, and a white lace dress will be laid on the bed in the other room; and flowers—Ferdinand never forgets to order them—will arrive for me to wear tonight, and dinner will follow, and I will later lie in my bed and sleep.

Ah! my dear Ferdinand, fly away from me, from the deadly light of a pair of drowsy, clear, straightforward eyes! There is nothing so dangerous as the boldly truthful eyes of a fascinating woman. Why do I not send this poor youth from me? Why does not the drunkard deny himself his drink? I do not consider myself responsible. I am a negative charged by the positive currents that come my way.

IV

If yesterday was gloomy, today is far more so, and a cold rain is falling. November! How it arrives always

with its chills and its gloom! What a dark, forbidding month in the city it is! The one delight is the early lighting of the street-lamps and buildings so that just as one is growing fatigued artificial aid is extended, like a wax hand in a jeweler's window covered with jewels. There is a pallid splendor in this wax hand, stiff and erect, with its diamonds flashing. November! It is a month, though, that I love, for even as I love the natural I love the artificial, and even as I love goodness I love evil, for good is evil asleep and evil is good awake. What a different thing is sin—that which we call sin—in Europe and America! There it is something that one must fear, like a great dangerous lion; here it is nothing more than a playful kitten with bells and a red collar. The lace curtains that the kitten tears to pieces are very fine, and it is a pity, but how graceful are its movements! Oh, how sturdy is America, how serious, and, after all, how innocent! There woman is taken seriously, respectfully. Here she is a drudge or a plaything. Perhaps the men know from experience that when woman is raised to any higher position she becomes a tyrant—they have plenty of history to prove it. The American women are tyrants, nine-tenths of them, but glorious tyrants. Here they are manikins. They stand about the streets like flowers in a garden ready to be plucked. Oh, this wise, degenerate old Europe! Why, it simply winks at the things that America is grave over. And its sauces penetrate and its wines sparkle in the eyes and steal into the blood. *Eh bien*, it is not my world. I am merely an onlooker. Were I to become moralist, socialist or any other *ist*, it would all go on just the same. I watch the play. I rejoice, however, that America, while boisterous and robust in a manner shocking to the over-sensitive, still waves its flag of intention toward being at least truthful, clean-minded and courageous. It is not boastful about its sinfulness. But here! Sin-

fulness and sinners are so bold that after the first shock they fail to astonish. Little children are as much at home in restaurants and at risqué performances as their parents. In the restaurant yesterday a girl of eight, with her hair plaited on the side and tied with a big scarlet bow and with a large hat set upward against her face like a black fan, drank her glass of wine and gazed listlessly and knowingly about. Her father and mother drank their wine in perfect content and paid no attention to the little girl. Oh, America, with her children fed punctiliously on milk! But after all, aren't there many wrecks at forty-five? There are wrecks here, too, but they are artistic wrecks and they sit in the cafés at seventy and eighty, a little hideous to the eye, but still sipping their drinks, eating their rare dishes and looking into the eyes of women. After all, who is wise? They at any rate experience life until they die, and don't retire at fifty, on skim milk. Ferdinand says he longs to be back, to go out to a certain hill that he knows, a kind of mountain, climb to the top of it and breathe.

That doesn't interest me. I can breathe perfectly well in a room with all the windows closed and the curtains drawn, and all the better if it is filled to overflowing with sweet-scented flowers. I breathe deliciously through the odor of tuberoses. This freshness that is always spoken of! It doesn't appeal to me, and I have noticed that the men and women too much given to it grow coarse and ugly. It is better suited to animals.

The dinner came off last night. It took place at the Café de Paris and was a great success. This Café de Paris is a most seductive place. Sofas line the walls, and on these sofas, with tables in front of them, some with escorts and some without, were women, each one a rival to the other, each attempting to eclipse the other, and with the aid of perfect milliners and perfect modistes the effects attained were in some cases almost wonderful, inasmuch as the human part of these beings seemed to

vanish altogether until they appeared like beautiful evil spirits of another world looking on at this one.

In the centre the more solid element dined, men with their families, a man and wife, or several old men in a party together.

I recall a group of youths. Their cheeks and eyes were bright, they looked eager and anxious to be amused. How terrible that they will some day be like the old men at the next table, and how terrible that I may some day be like one of the women I saw. She sat in a corner. Her eyes were still splendid, but filled with the horrible fear of old age. But she looked about with assurance as much as to say, "Though I have lost in charm I have gained in wisdom." I noticed a young man talking to her. His attention was fixed and several times he laughed heartily. What a horrible thing an old woman is—that old woman! After all, there may be something in becoming a grandmother. I don't know and I don't allow myself too much thought on *any* subject. Once I did, but I have learned a blissful philosophy—to feel the present hour with all my ten fingers and not to think about it. Seated near this old woman with the bold, terrified eyes, who was blond, once by nature and now by art, and who was clothed in black velvet, was another woman—a pallid, languid thing in white. She had on her head a large black hat and around her shoulders was a fur boa that was like a black snake. Her delicate face was of a pale blue-white and her lovely eyes with their blackened lids and lashes looked out in exquisite wickedness on the world. I thought of this woman when I awoke this morning. I chose to think of her asleep beneath a rose-silk coverlid. How divine she would look! And she, too, will become an old woman. Oh, how crowded is the world, how fascinating and how terrible in its remorseless destruction of all that it brings to perfection!

Ferdinand sat through the dinner as I expected he would, silent and with a wounded look in his eyes. They have become passionate eyes; purple circles

were beneath the shadow of his lashes. And still again that burning flush. I did not give him smiles, but several times I fixed an absent glance upon him that he could not define and that troubled him. There was nothing in the glance. Several attempts were made to bring him into the conversation—the French clatter going on about his ears which he did not understand. "Monsieur must be interested in the lovely women"; "Monsieur would probably carry back a French wife—if madame would consent."

The innuendo was allowed to pass, but it annoyed me, because I could make no reply that would not be silly. I glanced over at Ferdinand, whose eyes were in his plate, and at that moment he did not seem to me to be a human being, but an expression of youth.

I have just looked out of my window. How it still rains, and the man in the restaurant told us it often rained this way at this season for days at a time. I am thinking of some far-reaching fields, dreary and half-cultivated, in America, and of some old farm-houses where possibly it is also raining as it is here.

V

STILL it is not clear this morning. The sky looks like a gray tent soaked with rain and soot. The streets are not cheerful and the people moving about are like black shadows having no significance.

There is a bluish pearly light in the atmosphere, however, that gives promise of a possible clearing up and of the sun appearing. Oh, the splendor of this world, how it appals one! Always wondrously attired, forever changing its costume! One day it comes forth gray, on another blue, on another yellow, on another crimson, and sometimes with its mantle of ermine. Glorious world, how it approaches one according to its mood—great monster of power and magnificence. We resent the idea of death, and yet what a privilege to have lived here amid all the

beauty of sky and earth and sea, if only for an hour. I stretch out my arms to the world today in all its mysterious gloom as to a lover who has frowned upon me, and I shall be humble and coax its tenderness toward me. How fearful I am of sorrow coming toward me; how I have flattered the world that I might make it gentle with me! To be a successful flatterer one must have a quick, fine brain and a good heart; one must be able to find the weak spot and lovingly apply the lotion that heals and soothes. I have been that kind of flatterer. I have always flattered, but have never falsely flattered. Wherever I go I try to light a candle in each person about me, otherwise how dull things would be! I know people who not only do not light the candles in people, but who put out those they see burning. How dark must be the life of such an one! I want illumination about me; I want to see the souls of people shining as I see the lights shining in the streets. To illumine one's life by illuminating one's surroundings—that to me is very beautiful. I like all the waiters and elevator men and porters and clerks and pages at every hotel I stop at to be in love with me. I like the chambermaids to forget their work of making beds to spring impulsively to button the bodice I am struggling with or to hand me my wrap. I should like to be able to tell people how much joy there is in this.

Ferdinand is away today attending to some matters for me. I have just been in his apartment to get a certain letter left among his papers, and what a strange sensation I experienced in going from one room to the other. Here in my boudoir all is glowing disorder: wrappers and peignoirs in various shades lying about, street wraps and evening wraps, silk petticoats, colored slippers, pink roses, white chrysanthemums, powder-boxes, rouges, all the things that go to make up charming disorder, and over all the blended perfumes of the flowers and extracts of flowers. And his room—what a contrast! The window lowered from the top, everything

in order, every chair in place, not a garment visible; on the washstand a tooth-brush and box of tooth-powder, on the bureau a small comb and brush primly straight, and on his tables his papers—not one in disorder.

This is Ferdinand's room. I stood in it in dismay. Not one day could I live like this. I pulled the chairs about trying to give an atmosphere of comfort, but immediately I replaced them. I had disturbed something. I did not look for the letter. I was in too great a hurry to get back to my disorder, the vivid coloring that is always about me, and the flowers and perfumes. But I am thinking of all the young martyrs in the world who keep their rooms in order, and I am thinking of what a temptation I am to Ferdinand when he enters this room in the morning with the letters.

And what are my own feelings toward this youth? First, he is a great temptation to me. He is twenty-five and I feel quite sure—in fact, he has told me that no woman has possessed his heart. He puts a price on this, he impresses it upon me, he knows that it is a charm that must have value in my eyes. To make this young man whose soul is sorrowful, blissfully happy, that would indeed be lighting many candles and that indeed is temptation. It is safe to say that he is to me as great a temptation as I am to him. But the difference is that I realize the temptation while he is blinded by it. I am always conscious of it; he has only moments of half-consciousness. He is not sufficiently developed in ideas of love to know the real intoxication of love. There is no phase of love that I am not acquainted with. With him it would be entering a strange room in the dark; he must needs lose his way, fall over things. With me I know every nook and corner, every piece of furniture. I would only stretch out my arms and sail in pleasantly, and I would not lose my way and I would not be injured. Perhaps as I think of it neither is in love with the other. Ferdinand is in love with love, of which I am a voluptuous expression, and I

am in love with youth, of which he is a divine expression.

In any case Ferdinand must be unhappy through me as a part of his life. If I send him away he will be unhappy, if I continue to allow him to remain he will be unhappy. On my part, if I send him away I will not be unhappy—that is my advantage. And what I am writing, no matter how it might be regarded by others, is life.

Life! The secret of mine, if there be a secret, is my ability to discover something in which to find satisfaction. Before taking up my pen and this little book a while ago I lay back on my pillows and looked in delight for twenty minutes at a silk petticoat I purchased yesterday and which is lying across my trunk. The color, a delicate old rose, fascinated me, and the perfect work on it, the ruffle with its fine tucks and the ruchings, the white silk string at the belt—like a great collapsed pink balloon it lay there, and it has had its life, this inanimate, lovely thing, just as any of us have. It was conceived, created, given form, perfection and loveliness, and it will become old and creased and wrinkled and thrown aside. It was, however, all made for me to wear and do with as I wish, but there would not be very much pleasure in this had I merely regarded this lovely thing as a silk petticoat purchased to wear, and given no thought to it.

And so it is with Ferdinand. Were I merely to regard him as a young man, perhaps he would not be so interesting; but I regard him very differently, as a divine expression of youth, and the color of his eyes as a beautiful shade for me to look at in wonder. Centuries fashioned him and fate has presented him to me to study, to take pleasure in, just as fate has given me to him to suffer through. Following this train of thought I have again, beginning with my petticoat, counted the beautiful colors that I find in this room. Thirty, and then there are more! To have the privilege of idleness is the highest gift of existence.

Ferdinand has come in greatly refreshed. The little trip and his ab-

sence from me for a few hours have benefited him. He has been looking at girls and he thinks he is himself again. This bizarre room, with its colors and disorder and perfumes, offended him when he came in—I saw it. He has crossed a river and traveled a little in the country. I allowed him to tell me in a quick, businesslike way all that he had to say, and retire carrying with him to his bare, religious abode his thoughts of the river and the country and young girls. Alas! my young friend, this is merely allowing you to catch your breath. Tonight we will dine out in some charming place where there are low music and quiet lighting and languid, interesting faces, and you will look into mine—languid and interesting too, across the table, and you will forget the ever-moving river and the bare country and the pure faces of the young girls. You will forget everything but me, and I shall forget everything but you—except myself and my surroundings. I will see you and everything about me. You will see me. That is the difference. Tomorrow, however, I shall order some silver things for your bureau; I cannot bear the remembrance of that bareness in your room. It was the first time I had ever seen how Ferdinand lived apart from me and it has made a great impression on me. I wonder if Ferdinand says his prayers in this bare room. I believe he does.

It is now nearly six o'clock and of course quite dark, and the lights inside and outside are all ablaze. The pearly blue atmosphere of the morning was true to its promise, and by two the sun was shining. When I went downstairs I discovered an acquaintance, slight, but still an acquaintance—an American; and of course we greeted each other like dear friends.

This woman, who is really nice, almost as nice as a woman can be, caused me to change my plans then and there. Neither of us had lunched, and so we went out together, and after luncheon to a picture-gallery.

where we remained until we were put out, looking at pictures and talking. Most of the time our conversation was devoted to comparing Europe and America.

We both confessed to horrible seasickness. "Then why do we travel over here so often?" I asked her.

"Oh, to keep up!" was the answer. "To be in the swim!"

That isn't what I come for, but rather to be out of the swim; however, I said no more.

She wanted to buy lace, and so we drove, since we had been ousted from the gallery, to an old house established in 1700, where they have been making lace all these years.

It was extremely somber and extremely interesting. Some of the old women at work in the dim light at the windows looked as though they might have been there since 1700, too—one sad old creature of possibly over sixty whom they said had been making lace there since she was ten years old, long before I was born. It seemed so strange to me that throughout all that time she was at that window just as she was now, years before I came into the world. All these years she had sat with these beautiful laces in her hands and never once, possibly, put a piece on her back. She was making a beautiful rose and handling seven hundred threads. Wonderful old woman! What a contrast she was to the woman in the café with the bold eyes and the black velvet dress! And yet, which of the two had had the harder life? I put a franc in her poor old hand, which she lifted carefully from the lace rose, and went out pondering these things.

I feel tired; going about with a woman, no matter how pleasant she is, always bores me. Collectively, women sometimes amuse me; singly they invariably weary me. Collectively they are diverting because they are vicious toward one another and spurred on to a kind of dash and brilliance—it is like a game. I sit and look on, and when in the mood

find diversion in the spectacle. But two women alone! What can possibly be more tiresome? When I have enjoyed being with a woman alone it was when we were looking forward to the arrival of two men. Then two women can be animated and sociable—at no other time. However, it was very nice to meet an American. This woman and I—Clara, her name is; I never called her by it at home, but it was Clara and May here immediately—of course talked the usual American platitudes about virtue and woman's duty to her husband, but a young French officer was standing in the doorway awaiting her arrival and did not see me when she introduced me, so absorbed was he in looking at her. But there stood Ferdinand also, a most innocent thing, so why question Clara—I mean the presence of her Frenchman? At any rate, he was very angry at having been kept waiting.

Clara looked annoyed—she had told me that it went against her American ideas for a married woman under *any* circumstances to accept the attentions of *any* man except her husband.

Being a widow I had Clara at a disadvantage; and so it is with women—they always end with one or the other being at a disadvantage. Women can't continue long to be really comfortable together. Men can; the reason is that they are generally rather proud of their escapades and a woman is forced, by conventionality, to feel embarrassed. Clara certainly was beautifully gowned, and I was surprised to see how pretty she looked when she flashed an angry glance at the young Frenchman. Ferdinand, standing at a respectful distance, looked as though he should be lighting candles around an altar rather than dreaming in a French hotel where worldly scenes were going on. I had left no word, going out as I did, and my absence had alarmed him. The healthy look of the morning was gone; he was pale and sick at heart again—I suppose over his dissipated interest in young girls.

The time until dinner passed practically. He had received letters, money had arrived from the London bank, the usual routine of life was going on.

Ferdinand remarked a little bitterly when we were seated opposite each other in the dining-room that my interest in life, the superficial part of life, seemed to him a bit callous, as though I never went deep enough, as though I was always a graceful skater upon ice, a trifle with the cold surfaces, never an explorer, never a diver into the depth where the fire burns.

"My dear Ferdinand," I said indulgently, "I was, at your age, very much like you; you often remind me of myself, but time"—my eyes felt velvety and luminous as they do when I feel that I am going to be serious—"time, with its hours of sadness, its weeks of sickness, its months of despair, its petty successes, often death-like effort, its revelations of pettiness, injustice, death-bed scenes, its disappointments, never giving what you expect it to give, its handling you in its own way, not yours, changes all that. I have given up my dreams and accepted time as a master whose daily directions I obey. The beautiful part of youth is its unconsciousness of what is in store. It never heralds its designs—or purposes. Youth's captain is heroic and gallant, but he is blind; he would lead his children into the realization of all their hopes, but he leads them on the rocks that shatter them. If I offend you it is because I am no longer steered by the blind captain and because I no longer steer myself. If I seem to you indolent, self-indulgent, these are but the manifestations of a soul that has lost hope."

Ferdinand leaned toward me eagerly, as he does when he gets me to talk, and I went on:

"Once, years ago, I believed that the world would want the best in me that I could give, but it found that best tiresome. When I ceased to offer it, I lost hope, for only in giving of that best self was there for me happiness."

Ferdinand, whose senses were charmed by my mood, gazed at me with queer interest. "You are so marvelous!" he exclaimed.

"No, I am not," I laughed, "but in this moment I am fascinating—I feel it. I am capable of feeling and saying many things which may not be really true, but that would charm another."

"You expect me to believe that you are such a false creature?"

"False? No, sincere and truthful. Eat your fish," I added abruptly.

He took up his fork languidly. Of late, his food does not seem to interest him. He forgets it and allows his plates to be removed, only having tasted of their contents.

"Ferdinand," I said when the plates had been changed, "consider me your blind captain and leave me. I wish only your joy, but I may lead you into sorrow."

He made no reply to this, smiling sadly as though sorrow at my expense were welcome enough, and we went on with the dinner, which was merely a *petit souper* as we were on our way to the opera. For this reason I was in an evening gown, and I seemed to feel that I shall always see Ferdinand with my long opera wrap of ermine in his hands as he took it from a waiter and held it for me to put on. We got into a cab and were rolled rapidly to the opera-house. All day I had enjoyed the idea of taking Ferdinand to hear "Faust."

I do not believe that a sympathetic man and woman can ever go through this opera seated side by side, and ever be to each other quite the same again. Perhaps I was wrong to have this experience with Ferdinand, for it is one sublime, magnificent appeal to the senses.

My companion said little during the performance. During the acts he sat with his eyes fixed upon the stage, with the expression of one who gazes into a heaven he never expects to enter. And it was I who was deliberately showing him this heaven and extending him no promise.

One of the saddest sights I ever

witnessed was at a wayside station in Virginia. It was a cold, bleak day in the latter part of November. A little white and brown calf of about six weeks old was boxed up, waiting to be put on the train and carried to the city to be slaughtered. It was a most beautiful little calf, with all the sweet youth and innocence of a baby in its little form. Its coat, soft as velvet, was, except for the pretty red-brown spots, as white as snow, no doubt kept so by the loving mother. The box it occupied had been made almost to fit the little calf. It could not move. This was all sad enough, harrowing to the eye, but it was not the saddest part. Its mouth was bound with a leather strap so that it could not cry out. I approached it, but turned away in horror. All its misery was written in the gentle eyes it lifted to me. I turned in fury to the stolid farmer standing beside the innocent little victim. He made no reply to my outburst.

Someone should turn in fury to me, for Ferdinand is imprisoned and cannot cry out. Dear Ferdinand, will you not remember when all this comes back to you that you, too, are my temptation?

To bid you good night in your youth, with your inspired face last night, filled too as I was with the music of "Faust" and the kisses and caresses of "Faust," was something for which I deserve credit. And why did I? In love that comes beautifully to two souls—love that floats in as on the wings of doves, unless it be the betrayal of the trust of another, can there be any wrong?

The fact is, I believe I am afraid. To rob one of self-contentment, and to destroy one's youth, is a frightful thing. I do not like the idea; it may be also that I still continue to enjoy the period of sensitiveness and tenderness that is so beautifully revealed to me through Ferdinand. I almost wish at times that Ferdinand would destroy his own youth, become in one masterful moment older and stronger than

I am, or shall ever be; for some day Ferdinand will become a man, while I shall always be a child.

VI

To my great regret this morning a telegram called me to London.

I say great regret, because leaving the Continent for London is like going in from a beautiful light flower-garden to a gloomy stone house to be protected from the rain. For days my spirits go down, and I sit about looking out on the smoke and mist in perfect despair. After that I begin to go to the theatres and finally become, in a way, adjusted.

I do not like gloomy things, and London is gloomy. I can understand why it is the centre of theatres. One must have places to go where gloom can be shut out for a few hours and forgotten. If it were not for the theatres, what a dismal place London would be!

The trip across from Calais—I wonder that I have the courage to refer to it—is the worst thing that could possibly happen to anyone. I left the boat, my heavy veil down, clinging to Ferdinand and crying bitterly. I had the feeling of having been put on the rack and terribly ill-treated for something I had never done. I think I never felt quite so pitiful before. I was trembling in every nerve, and there were two more hours of travel, and the smell of smoke. But finally I arrived! Rain, of course, cabs in abundance, cabmen gleaming in wet hats and rubber coats, noise and confusion. At last we were tearing along in a hansom, parting the mist, as it were, in which yellow lights gleamed sullenly.

That was three nights ago, and I have not been out of bed. I have been up now and then, it is true, getting my room into disorder! I have put up some French pictures that cause the chambermaid and housekeeper to look upon me with suspicion. This amuses me. Some of these pictures are really very fine, and they interest me because

they depict certain phases of Continental life. Flowers, of course, abound, and my books and pamphlets and slippers and negligées make up my usual environment.

Nevertheless, I do not feel cheerful. I look out of my window at solemn, gloomy stone houses. I can see the fires blazing in the fire-places opposite, and lights burning. My own little fire-place, my greatest consolation, is this moment casting fantastic pictures on the wall.

I felt a while ago if I did not get out of my room I would faint, so I got up and dressed, and here I am in the magnificent but ponderous writing-room. What a very splendid affair it is, and how very comfortable and tiresome. The rain has kept the women in and they are sitting about as stupid as chickens, reading and writing letters and yawning. I spent a rainy day like this in Berlin, and what a delight! Beverages flowed, a Turk in charming costume walked gracefully about serving coffee, the people played cards and other games, there was ceaseless merriment and subtle charm. Why be so bored and dignified? What is gained, and how much is lost! The men who walk through look as though they had never had a thought of women in their lives, and in Berlin those who walked through looked as though they never had another thought. I know these men are not what they seem, or the women, possibly, but why this brown curtain down all the time? As I have to stay here awhile, and not having the interest to go about to restaurants as I have on the Continent, I have arranged with the floor waiter to serve my meals in my sitting-room. Ferdinand will eat with me. One must do something to keep cheerful, and why send the poor fellow off to eat alone? I don't think the housekeeper fancies my arrangement of eating *en famille* with Ferdinand any more than she does my French pictures, but while I am not uncomfortably affected by people's preferences, liking, as I have explained, to be *en rapport* with everybody, good, bad and indifferent, I do not allow them to

interfere with me. Ferdinand has of course grieved over my illness. Business has almost been suspended between us, and he has nursed me as a son would. I sometimes wish he were my son. I would have the sweet, gentle pleasure of his companionship and there would be no complications.

A party of Americans, two women and three girls, have just passed through. They were very boisterous, but they seemed to be enjoying themselves. Why am I such a silent, uncommunicative thing with women? Self-preservation, possibly. No matter how gay they appear they are always hurting one another.

Ferdinand is busy. He has just been in with a paper for me to sign. I told him to go at once and get tickets for the most lurid show in town, whatever it was. Now I am going to sit under the brightest lights I can find, in the lowest, softest chair, and read the London society novel that I have begun. There is nothing dull about English novels and the open fires *are* nice! I am awfully sorry that I don't like tea, but I don't—I'm a coffee fiend, and coffee fiends are spoiled for tea. I feel insufferably affected and insincere when I drink afternoon tea, but I'm going to try it. They serve it in a beautiful Winter garden and the orchestra that commences to play at five is a very sweet one. I'm going to rouse myself in every possible way I can, to make this time in London a go. Ferdinand won't be, I am sure, half the temptation that he has been. Environment is everything!

VII

LONDON does upset me!

I have been very cruel to Ferdinand for the past few days, cold and abrupt, even a bit satirical. I do not know why, except that it is another way of entertaining myself. It is not that my interest in Ferdinand has wavered. I am particularly fond, as I have remarked, of coffee, but if I am the least ill, I can't touch it; the very sight or smell of it offends me.

One morning I wake up feeling well and quite eager for my coffee, and so I suppose it will be with Ferdinand—I have possibly been mentally sick, an old ailment of mine. While it lasts, poor Ferdinand must go about with a wounded heart and pathetic eyes. Sometimes I fancy that I am imagining that Ferdinand is in love with me; it is when his eyes are gray and fixed upon me with a cold, penetrating glance that disconcerts me—he seems then to see into my very soul. I wonder what Ferdinand would think of me if he really could see into my soul? What a wicked thing is even a good woman when a man has had the misfortune to interest her!

In the Winter garden downstairs there are some wonderful Oriental sofas, big and beautiful, with seats nearly a yard deep and sofa-pillows that melt into your back. When Ferdinand is in his evening clothes, charming and handsome, I allow him to sit by my side on one of these luxurious sofas, where a big palm droops over my head, and I act toward him quite as though he were my lover, allowing myself for the time really to feel that he is. The palms and rugs and the sweet music make up an environment quite suited to my ideas, and I do not hesitate to drug myself with the magnetism that emanates from Ferdinand in delicious waves. I take in these stupefying wave-currents as I partake of the pleasant things he orders for me to drink. All this, to judge from Ferdinand's looks, is quite to his liking, and if it is true what the philosophers tell us, that the present moment is the only thing worth counting, are we not merely being philosophical? I like to look at it that way; I have long since had on hand a perfect store of epigrams from modern philosophers as answers to any impertinent questions on the part of conscience. Conscience should be considered in the light of a servant who must never fail in the performance of duty when called upon, but never answer back, or be in evidence when there is private

entertainment on the part of the master or mistress. Conscience would forbid feasting upon Ferdinand's magnetic wave-currents or delighting in his flushed cheeks and luminous eyes, but I say under my breath, "That is all conscience," and conscience retires immediately to the pantry or back-yard of my brain. When one has dominated conscience, made a good servant of him—I am sure conscience is masculine—who never thinks of arguing, but who will converse humbly when one feels like a self-flattering conversation, one has accomplished a great deal. And that is where I have got conscience, after a hard and bitter fight, and that is why if I found Ferdinand on his knees in tears before me it would not disturb me. I like to lie back on one of those delightful couches I have described and watch the changing expressions in Ferdinand's spiritual, yet passionate, profile.

VIII

THERE are times, sitting contentedly in this hotel, when it seems to me that the old idea of "home life" is a thing of the past. I used to think that in order to live peacefully it was necessary to have an independent, fixed habitation, but I no longer believe that. Having mastered the art—and it is an art—of living in hotels, I feel perfectly at home in one. One must have a fortune to have a dozen servants at one's command in a home, but in a foreign hotel, at any rate, it is quite simple; and servants without the trouble of them is the quintessence of luxury. Servants were what made the South such a heavenly dream in the old days. I always have believed in slavery and always will. Where would have been the splendors of ancient Rome had there been no slaves? To touch the bell for waiter, page, maid and valet, and to have these well-trained beings always inoffensively hovering about is simply entrancing; and yet there are those still cling-

ing to home life as the Baptists do to immersion. Ah! home life—it meant and means many wearied women. Lack of home life perhaps means something more—idle women, with Satan on hand finding “mischief still for idle hands to do.” Nevertheless it is delightful. How could one live as I am living, in a home? It would be impossible. Ah! the restrictions of some homes I remember, and the emptiness and monotony! Here one has only to turn the eyes and brain to be constantly entertained. Night and day there is a panorama going on. I wonder if these pages present one? They do to me.

Last night I came in late from the theatre and outside nearly every door of the long broad hall in which I reside was a pair or pairs of shoes. There were in this collection shoes of every description, from heavy calfskin to bronze slippers. One could almost imagine the inmates of the rooms from the shoes outside. At one door were the solitary pair of a bachelor; at another a man and woman's, side by side. What a story might not those shoes tell! At another a tiny low pair with ridiculously high heels, and at one door—I had seen these particular shoes for several nights and placed there very early—a pair of man's shoes and beside them a child's—a little boy of perhaps four. Does the father go to bed early for the sake of the little fellow? Are they in different beds, or does the child sleep in his father's arms? Is the mother of the child a good woman who has died, or a bad woman who has forsaken the father and child? One sees only the empty shoes outside the closed door—who wears them one rarely knows. These things, these thoughts are the 'cello solos in the orchestral accompaniment to my duet existence with Ferdinand.

Ah! only an idler has time to listen to the 'cello solos of life's accompaniment to the solo parts, but then only an idler really lives—for only an idler has time to cultivate his own consciousness. The busy, the rushers are

never conscious; they are, as it were, ahead of themselves and what surrounds them. I keep pace with myself, revel in my own consciousness and note every detail of my environment. Acute consciousness is life. One's very sorrows become interesting when they are intelligently analyzed. Ah! do I not know a time when they were not intelligently analyzed and when I lay buried beneath them? I wonder if Ferdinand thinks I have always been the self-indulgent, egotistical being I am today? I should like to discuss myself with him, explain to him that I am really a flower that has bloomed out of my dead self, but somehow I can never thus approach Ferdinand. And why should I? Better that he see me only as I am and I see him only as he is.

We know absolutely nothing of each other. Suppose I were to find out that Ferdinand has had a past? But that is absurd!

I return to myself—which is, after all, the only thing. . . . It is five o'clock; downstairs the orchestra is giving vent to a few preliminary sighs, and tea, the inevitable, is being served.

I might go down, but I can experience it all quite as well from here. It is only at night that I care to sit in that mellow-toned Winter garden, and I wonder if there are many here who get as much out of it as I do? I think not. While dressing to descend to it I put myself in the proper frame of mind. I am Eve entering the Garden of Eden after she has hobnobbed with Satan and allowed it to become peopled with sinners. The very idea of a Garden of Sinners excites my imagination, so I enter cloaked in my society mask, questioned by them as they are by me. Sometimes my eyes rest on those of a woman. She returns my gaze, our masks fall off and we know each other perfectly. After that, when we pass in the hall we smile. But as a rule I extend good or evil sympathy to no one; I take the looks of admiration flung at me angrily or kindly as I take the bitter-sweet cocktail before my dinner. Both whet the appetite for

enjoyment. Then I lounge, thankful that the day for ladies to sit erect in their chairs is over, look up at the beautiful blue dome studded with electric lights to represent stars, and rejoice in all the artificiality that has crept into the world.

Ferdinand says the palms are genuine, but I have my doubts about some of them and it adds to my interest. Oh, yes, I am quite done with the natural, for coming in contact with the natural means facing one's soul and giving one's conscience the right to be impertinent. Nothing pleases me more than the fountain in the centre, where blue electric lights are embedded in the foliage that climbs about it, where the water trickles coolingly and where the pallid flowers pretend to bloom. I look languidly at the women in their exquisite gowns, with bared shoulders, who pass and repass me, I catch the perfume of their garments and the famished or passionate looks from their eyes. I see them luring men or wearying men, and I feel myself a part of this empty show, that men struggle to be bored in and women sell body and soul to revel in. Cigarette-smoking, common, of course, is enhancing—it gives a wicked charm to women out of all proportion to the simple pastime; it lures them into seductive attitudes, to send out magnetic glances; it gives a boldness that brings them into kinship with men.

One girl last night I can never forget. She wore white; her arms and shoulders were bare. She had a flushed, half-wearied, half-eager face, and red hair that was untidy as from caresses. Her eyes were dark, perhaps dark red if one could see into them, and she sat alone, head back, cigarette alternately between finger or lips, and stared with a look that to me spoke of indulged passions and disappointed hopes. She was petite and dainty; her nose turned up; beneath her chin she was lovely. Possibly she was twenty-three—certainly not more. Who was this young woman, red-haired, dark-eyed, flushed of face, who could sit alone thus and blow cigarette-smoke in the air—whose

very presence bespoke all the experience and desolation of old age? Will she be there tonight? Possibly not. It is only in my mind that she will continue to exist. It is these blossoms of artificiality that engage me. I know women of her age who pick roses in flower gardens. I can see that, in comparison, they are very stupid, with their great inexperienced eyes fixed on the heavens. Oh, yes, this Winter garden is a feverish dream to those who understand how to enjoy it. And the music! It creeps over one like feathers or cuts into the flesh like silken cords. I give myself up to all this and I take the strength out of Ferdinand and look with interest in the morning upon his pale face. This pale Ferdinand of the morning standing composed and erect with letters in his hands is a very different being from the Ferdinand of the evening before, with flushed cheeks and lips on fire.

"Ferdinand," I said the other evening when we were seated thus, "tell me something of your past love affairs."

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"And what became of her—this divinity?"

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Ferdinand remained silent a moment and then went on rather mechanically:

"Two years ago I had occasion to spend time in a mining camp. The little hotel was execrable—service,

meals, everything bad except the daughter of the woman who ran the place."

I smiled a bit, but Ferdinand went on composedly:

"She was young and fair and lovely. She had long light hair that came to her knees when it was not plaited. She was vain of this beautiful hair and used to wash it and sit out in the sun with it spread over her. At other times she wore it quite simply plaited in two long plaits down her back like Marguerite in 'Faust.' Her eyes were very blue and she had a low, sweet, placid brow. Her little hands—she worked very hard—were red and coarse. They did not seem ugly to me, but pathetic, and when she would pass the heavy, coarse dishes to me I used to want to press my lips to them. I did not, but sometimes the tears came to my eyes. You are smiling?"

"Yes, but go on."

"Believe me, she was very sweet in spite of her menial occupation."

"I have seen little young pigs that were very sweet," I replied.

"Yes, so have I, but this girl was not a young pig. She played on the piano, simple things, rag-time pieces, the current ballads, and she sang in a childish voice that was not sweet; it was—what shall I say?—young and also pathetic. I used to sit outside on the porch and listen."

"How very touching!"

"You asked me to tell you," said Ferdinand curtly.

"I did; go on."

"Well, we were all in love with her, but it was I whom she honored with her consideration. I always had a clean napkin, the best that the kitchen afforded, and fresh flowers in my room. In the evenings when she finished with her music she would wander out on the porch and look from the railings at the mountains beyond and the stars until I called her, and then she would come and sit beside me demurely and innocently. She had all the reticence and stupidity of the undeveloped, the uneducated; but the night I left she came with me

as far as the gate and burst into tears and threw herself in my arms and clung to me. I held her a moment and bent down and kissed the pretty hair that she was vain of and took such pains with, and then I freed myself and lifted the little hard red hands and kissed them. I have never seen her since."

We remained silent quite a while after this. The orchestra was playing a mazurka, and the instruments seemed gasping a bit hysterically. When it ceased I aroused myself.

"And now the third?" I said.

"The third is more recent. It occurred just two months ago."

"Two months ago? Since you were with me?"

"Yes, when we were in Berlin. You remember all the people you knew at the Hotel Bristol and especially that German lieutenant they introduced to you—how constantly you were out with him?"

"Oh, yes."

"There was a little girl I bought cigarettes of."

"A cigarette-girl?" I sneered.

"Yes, but an innocent and very sweet girl. There was a little shop—her mother was always there, knitting something while the girl served the customers. I was nearly always alone—you were always out, going somewhere—returning late, and I was always sitting in my room waiting for you to come in. Sometimes it was very late—you remember how late you often were—but I never went to bed. I sat with my door open waiting to hear your step, the swish of your skirts, I never mistook anyone for you. I used to go to my door to get a glimpse of you vanishing into your room, and I smoked box after box of cigarettes purchased from the little girl. In desperation, merely for some human companionship, I began to talk to her—I speak a little German, you know. Finally I think I made love to her—at any rate with my eyes. When I was leaving she gave me a picture of herself—a little photograph. Do you care to see it?"

He took from his card-case a small photograph and handed it to me. I looked quite eagerly into the young face while feeling Ferdinand's gaze on me.

"Shall I destroy it?" he asked.

I hesitated. "No," I said finally. "Keep your picture."

To be jealous of Ferdinand is at present impossible; should it ever be possible it belongs to the future when he shall have matured into manhood—I into old age. What a terrible jealousy that must be—each day adding to the man's charms, each day taking from the woman's.

"Ferdinand," I said, returning to the present as from imprisonment in icebergs, "it is very wrong for a young man to awaken emotions in young girls and then forsake them. Young girls are foolish. They lie awake at night and cry." I looked again at the picture. "I was once a young girl, Ferdinand—I know."

"It does not seem possible," answered Ferdinand, "that you were ever other than you are today—now, this moment!"

"Oh, but I was! I was young and fair and innocent and full of romance and dreams of love. Do you not wish you could have known me then—that dead girl—dead as your poor sweetheart cousin!"

"No," answered Ferdinand emphatically.

"But why, since those who were like that attracted you?"

"It would be," said Ferdinand, smiling, "to lose you as you are today."

"You mean your impression of me?"

"Yes, my impression of you. Is not that all that counts—one's impression?"

"All that counts and destroys," I answered; "that is being an idealist."

"I'm not an idealist," said Ferdinand seriously; "I am an analyst. But your presence blunts the physician's knife. Suppose a surgeon is to perform an operation on a little child and it looks up and smiles at him—he rather dreads his part, doesn't he?"

Ferdinand was speaking strangely.

"I don't understand you—the connection, I mean."

He changed his attitude. "There is none," he said. "I mean that it is difficult in your presence to do other than submit to your personality."

While Ferdinand was talking thus a beautiful waltz was being played. People under the spell of it had grown silent and were reclining and listening absently. Boys were moving about gracefully bearing wines and fruits, coffee and liqueurs. The majority of the women were accompanied by men and I conceived of many dramas going on. Near the entrance sat a woman who arrested my attention. She smoked incessantly one cigarette after another and drank tall glasses of diluted absinthe. Near her was a sharp-featured, black-haired woman dressed in black tulle with saffron-colored roses in her hair. She was not pretty and her arms and neck were scrawny. She was ugly, but she looked wicked. There was a man with her—bored, indifferent, but her slave.

Near her on one of the big couches over the back of which had been thrown her pink-lined opera wrap, sat a little old lady of seventy, charmingly gotten up in lavender silk and a great many pearls. Her tiny feet, perched on a hassock, were in red slippers, and her sweet little old face was powdered and rouged. She wore a wig and the gentle little face of a silly old woman who had always been a belle was quaint and delicious beneath the auburn coloring. She was accompanied by three men who responded to her every movement. There were many others, but I closed my eyes on them all and listened to the beautiful waltz in which I seemed to see all these people floating rhythmically in and out of white clouds.

"I am afraid, Ferdinand," I said, opening my eyes suddenly as the waltz ceased, "that you have confided to me the very least of your love-affairs."

Ferdinand said nothing; he merely fixed his eyes upon me and in their beautiful depths I read that he recognized but one love—the love that was now burning like a flame within him.

I smiled. But a moment later as we rose to leave I wondered to myself if I should not be an analyst and analyze this love of Ferdinand's for him, tell him of its actual value, teach him to regard it as an instrument developing him into a man, and nothing more. But I did not. It was too vaguely and intoxicatingly sweet as a part of a dream-like environment. I took Ferdinand out of the environment for a moment and it seemed that the fires and lights of the building went out all at once. I shivered.

"You are not cold?" Ferdinand asked.

"No, I am very happy tonight, Ferdinand, but my happiness is of such a filmy character I fear lest it be dispelled all at once—all of a sudden."

"Why are you happy tonight?" asked Ferdinand tenderly, as he led me through the crowded room.

"Because I am content in a dream that I do not wish to become a reality; because the present, just as it is tonight, this moment, suffices. When we begin to look ahead, to desire more than the present moment offers, the sweetness of the present moment has already become eclipsed."

Ferdinand said nothing, and I thought half sadly that this dream that his presence created might be all this young man had to give.

IX

I HAVE been so busy for the past week with shopping, fittings, alterations, getting into shape my Winter wardrobe, that I have had little time for sentimentalizing with Ferdinand. One of my purchases, a black velvet skirt with which I am to wear a chin-chilla coat and a large black hat, rather interests me. I wore the costume this afternoon and when I came upon Ferdinand with a color in my

cheeks and some American Beauty roses, or an approach to them, in my hands, I experienced through his glance the sensation that I had anticipated as a reward for my painstaking. It—the look on Ferdinand's face—was the same I have felt come into my own, in the old days, when of a sudden I turned and faced a glorious sunset. We had met in the lobby and it being tea-hour we passed in and took our favorite couch in the corner. The place was well filled and I glanced about me as usual. To see men drinking tea rather offends me; I have a terrible fear that like the women in Germany they will take a long bag from their pockets and begin to crochet. The present men were not especially animated; I was, so I began to talk.

"I can't tell you," I said to Ferdinand, after we had given an order for something that we might be rid of the waiter, "how sorry I always feel for men who are married to attractive, vivacious women!"

"Why?" asked Ferdinand, surprised.

"Oh, poor fellows," I returned, putting my gloves in my muff and stretching my fingers, "they must be so bored by them!"

"But why, especially if they are attractive?" asked Ferdinand, more interested in my lips than in my words.

"My dear fellow, if they are attractive, and especially if they are vivacious, so much the worse. Imagine, now, going to a bright, attractive play every night for ten years! Wouldn't it pall horribly on you? You can understand how surfeited, no matter how excellent it was, one would become, can't you? To attend the same lecture, especially if it was a dull one, would not be half so tiresome; one might even sleep! But the eternal brightness of the play, the lights, the music, the same enlivening things over and over again—think of the horror of it! It can't be very long before a man knows all his wife's tunes by heart—I mean her facial expressions, moods, spurts of vivacity, spurts of temper, baby plead-

ings, woman's exactions, girlish satisfactions. He has been hearing them and applauding them for ten years. And yet he has got to go on seeing this same play no matter how many other attractions there may be in town, endlessly—the rest of his life. He has got to see it! Even when it has wearied the large audience it first drew, the large audiences that stood for approval of his choice, when they have lost interest and are discussing newer and more up-to-date things, he's got to stick to that one play, he has got to see it when he is the last man in the house and when the play has gone to pieces, and he knows it. I refer, of course, to the proper married man, the one who takes marriage seriously."

"How cynical you are!" said Ferdinand, studying me.

"Look at that man," I exclaimed, "in the corner of that sofa, and look at his wife trying to hold his attention. It's terrible—for both of them, I mean! By all means, Ferdinand, when you marry, marry a plain woman, one who does her hair smooth and looks after you without trying especially to interest you or centre your attention on herself. It will be far less tiresome."

Ferdinand smiled a bit sadly. "If I ever thought of marrying," he said, "and I suppose of course I did, in a vague way, your criticisms and observations on marriage have caused me to abandon the dream."

"But why take my word?" I asked, suddenly irritated. "You should not abandon your dreams so easily. I do not like to feel, or rather in the future I should not like to feel, that I had ever caused you to abandon anything!"

"Why are you cross?" he asked gently.

"I don't know! I suppose because I am tired. I detest shopping, but I detest, more, not having things. I do have such times with fitters and designers! Because I appear careless and like careless-looking clothes, they naturally suppose that I am careless, but when they find out that that careless appearance is studied, and that I won't have a ruffle when I want a band,

the trouble begins, and it ends in one's exhaustion. Besides, I changed my rooms while you were out this morning. The corner suite has a piano. Did you know that I sang?"

"No!" exclaimed Ferdinand, starting, "and I play!"

"You play the piano?" I asked, astonished, "and you never told me?"

"You never told me that you sang!"

Ferdinand and I were both excited.

"What do you play—how much do you play—pieces like your girl with the coarse fingers, or do you really play?"

"There isn't a piece of music in the world," said Ferdinand, "that I could not play if you wanted to hear it." He laid his hand on my sleeve. "And if you would sing while I played—" He broke off and when I glanced at him I saw that he was deadly pale.

"Pardon me," he said.

So we are to give ourselves up to music. This is a very dangerous thing to do. I am not altogether to be trusted under the influence of music.

Knowing that Ferdinand is a musician explains many things about him that have puzzled me. Five years of his life, he told me, were devoted to the study of music under the best German masters. How little, after all, I know of this young man who has become my daily companion and who has caused me to forsake the world to revel in a new experience! It is not difficult, however, for me to do this. Society is a handicap to experience and individual expression. And why, I sometimes wonder, this feverish desire on my part for individual expression—experiences in which the perfect abandonment of my mood may be unhindered by the general rules of life. There are those to whom shining is nothing unless before an audience; the real joy of shining is in being alone and undisturbed to revel in the beautiful lights that radiate from and about one. My desire for material things is not for what they are in themselves—their value, and especially in the eyes of others—but that they may conduce to my comfort and put me in a better condition to indulge thoughts in which

the things themselves are in no way concerned. I love beautiful things about me because I can cause them to fade away and become beautiful dreams.

X

My new rooms that contain the baby grand piano are very desirable. They overlook the small rail-environed park, at the back of which, opposite my windows, the sun sets. Sunsets in London are weird, mystical, resplendent, these gorgeous farewell colors commencing to pierce the mist, that invariably hangs low, as early as three o'clock. There is rarely a soul ever to be seen in the park, and its solitary quietude, surrounded by the noise and bustle of cabs and busses and pedestrians, pleases me. I have had the piano put to the right of the bay-window, from which I can watch the sunset effects, while Ferdinand plays in the afternoon. The rooms are extremely pretty, the carpet being a solid red and the chairs and couches and curtains and draperies of old rose. The lace curtains are very fine and the design on them unusually pretty and unique. It consists of branches of trees with birds on them. The fireplace is large, the brass fixtures handsome, and before it is a very soft rug with long, silky hair. I have drawn the couch half-way across one corner of the rug and here I shall lie and listen to Ferdinand play. By lifting and turning my head I can see the sunset effects when I prefer them to the low fire. Ferdinand also has but to look over his shoulder to see the sunset.

I wish it were a pipe organ that Ferdinand is to play, but the piano has a pretty tone and will answer quite well. Was it for this performance for me that Ferdinand spent five years in the study of music? Does Ferdinand realize his own danger, I wonder, and if so, how does the realization affect him? I read the other day these words: "The secret of a joyful life is to live dangerously," and in thinking it over I have really then had a joyful life with Ferdinand, for I have lived dan-

gerously with him. I am deliberately at present arranging for myself an even more dangerous situation; nor can I deny that it is joyful. How one builds and plans for moments! To me, however, the moments that are not planned, the accidental experiences, are insipid. There is no taste in them; it is like eating at a lunch-counter whatever turns up or comes in sight, without having previously whetted the appetite. I like my stage set just as they do it in the theatres and to lead up by actual plan to the third act from the first and second. It is true that there has been nothing planned about my experience with Ferdinand. Am I at the point when, for the sake of my own interest in the affair, I should plan and look forward? I think not. There are dreams as well as realities in life, and I am at present in the tranquillity of a beautiful dream. But if I did plan would it be wrong—not to myself; I am beyond that—but to Ferdinand? That Ferdinand loves me is beyond doubt. He loves me to the extent that being in my presence is sufficient. There is absolutely nothing gross about this young idealist. There are times when his modesty and the lack of animal supremacy in him make him appear to me like a young girl in disguise. I am rather pleased that so fragile a love-affair can entertain me. Is it not proof that a little that is fine and ethereal is left in me?

One of these beautiful sunsets I have referred to is occurring as I write. There are but two shades in the heavens—banks of dark purplish clouds over which pale, watermelon-pink gauze is festooned and moving aimlessly. One tiny clear lake is apparent and this is surrounded by a pale green shore upon which I seem to see a few leafless, virgin trees. There is no gorgeousness in the sunset, no resplendent yellow, and it is not persistent; it is fading as I pen this word and the park is growing dark. The line of cabs that stand on one curved side of it all have their lamps lit. They are awaiting the events of the night. My mind travels to the theatres that are not yet lit up. What

awful chasms of gloom they are at this moment—these pleasure-houses! How like a human being they are in whom the light of love has expired! The temporary experiences of my life when there was no love shining reminds me of these mournful, empty buildings as they are at this moment.

Like them, suddenly I became alight, and the emotions that filled me were as many and varied as the numerous people who will a few hours later fill the theatres. To deny one's self love—what folly!

And what is this love? In my mind it is the lighting equipment, the chandeliers that hang in each being. People are more or less magnificently equipped for being illuminated just as buildings are. I know some shops and some people in which hang only one small lamp; I know others in which hang hundreds. I have many lamps in my building, but for a long time they have been turned low. When am I to be illuminated? And whose will be the hand that will turn on the switch? This gentle Ferdinand? Has he the strength? And if he should suddenly see this blazing *me!* Alas, I tremble, my poor boy, for us both.

I got up just now and turned on all the lights in this room to see the effect. How it shut out everything from without! And that is what love does. Only vague shadows exist for me out there; my present existence is in this shut-in blaze. Light! Yes, that is love. The sun is the world's lover. There are times when it all but perishes in those fiery arms, but without those fiery arms it would entirely perish. Light, and in the light boundless, throbbing heat. Light to be dazzled by, heat to be melted by! I passed from the blaze of light I had been contemplating to the sitting-room, which was still in darkness, and discovered Ferdinand seated in an arm-chair in the bay-window gazing at the clouds where the sun had left a faint glow. The heavens by this glow had become less gloomy, but the room in which

Ferdinand was sitting was as purple as a dark sea. The indistinctness of it, the warmth from the fire burned down to a pale gray, the perfume of my garments of the afternoon all affected me strangely and pleasurably. I stood for an instant looking at the long, slender figure of Ferdinand, who had apparently forgotten conditions. His head was back, his feet extended and his hands limp. Was Ferdinand forgetting our business relations? Had I been too indulgent? A slight anger overcame me at his paying no attention to my presence and I moved swiftly and turned on a flood of light in this room also.

Ferdinand sprang to his feet as though suddenly awakened from a dream, and approaching me quickly grasped my two wrists in a fierce clasp and bent above me an entirely strange face. There was evil, satire and amusement in his look; a large vein made a crooked line down his forehead, which was flushed, and his eyes were determined, gloomy and sullen. I felt myself completely dominated and stood with my eyes in his as long as he chose to hold me thus. Suddenly he released me, and becoming in an instant altogether natural, referred to a matter of business.

To be myself so quickly was not so easy. I stood before him, baffled and breathless, trembling in every nerve. When I attempted to reply my voice failed me. I turned from him and went over and looked out of the window at the now entirely dark sky and at the curved row of empty cabs standing with their lamps lighted. When I looked in, Ferdinand had left the room.

And so there is even here the wolf in sheep's clothing, the sagacious animal that is in all men, that has forgotten for an instant to feign sleep.

This astonishing revelation has rather upset me. My wrists still hurt, I feel an uncomfortable pallor, and withal I am angry. My delicious dream, my pretty house of pink cards and tissue-paper has been rudely destroyed by a hand that I never

once suspected. Is this Ferdinand the rather weak sentimentalist that I have taken him to be, or is he a creature who has himself well under control? A flush of anger superseded my pallor. Has not Ferdinand exceeded all the proprieties; has he not, in fact, been extremely impudent?

XI

Two weeks have passed, and during the entire time Ferdinand has been the same gentle, half-asleep being that he has ever been, save for that one intense moment. Neither of us has referred to it. So completely is he himself that I sometimes wonder if the occurrence was not an instantaneous flight of the imagination on my part, or some manifestation of Ferdinand's sub-conscious self, of which he has no knowledge. At any rate, he appears to be entirely unconscious of it. He is the same respectful, attentive, adoring, adorable youth. If there really did spring up within him the dominant spirit of the male, it was momentary, or he has it entirely under control. The moment, however, is never effaced from my mind. It was a fascinating moment, a quick, unexpected, compelling situation from which I have not recovered and which I long to have repeated. There is nothing I have not done to tempt and tantalize Ferdinand into another such expression, but I had as well, so far as any success has gone, attempt to create out of the gentle sheep, grazing on the hillside, a ferocious lion. I have taken infinite pains with my costumes and have appeared before Ferdinand in every possible garb from low-neck white satin to my pale blue bath-robe that I know he admires. Nothing moves him. He looks at me with the same reverential adoration that proclaims him by every act my slave. And my desire to arouse Ferdinand has become a passion. To see once more, if only for an instant, that evil, satirical, amused expression, that flushed brow with

the swollen vein and those smoldering, sullen eyes, would fill me with the very ecstasy of triumph. I am as powerless, though, as if a narcotic had been administered to Ferdinand. Failing in my more delicate methods I have attempted bolder ones. I have tried making him jealous; I have pointed out attractive men to him, described their pleasing characteristics, but Ferdinand has merely watched me.

"Were you always just as you are now?" he asked me last night when I had been discussing the charms of a tall, ministerial-looking gentleman of delicate, scholarly countenance, who looked out on the scenes about him in the palm-room from beneath exquisite, slender, ringed fingers, a man who, one felt, took his pleasures so delicately that they diffused before being fully realized.

"In what way?" I asked.

"Were you always enamored of self, careless, abandoned to the world's shallow entertainment?"

I thought before answering Ferdinand, and there rose up before me a vanished self who had thought little of self at all, whose life had consisted in living for others, whose eyes had ever been lifted above the world, a being to whom the sacrifice of self had meant a half-wild, half-blind delight. I laid my hand on his chair.

"No," I answered, "it is only very recently that I learned the philosophy of living for self at all. Sometimes I do not even recognize this present, this new me; sometimes this new me makes me forget who I really am and that," I added sadly, "is best—I want to forget. Whenever I succeed in detaching myself from all that has been, from all that I remember, and tie myself down with strong cords to the present, it is better for me. I used to love the quiet part of my nature. I used to love it so that people marveled at my tranquil life; they said I was always in a dream. I was. I had but to lift my eyes to feel my whole being impregnated with happiness. I do not know why that was so; it was as though

I were a part of a great mystery that held me spell-bound. I could stand under a tree for whole hours, ravished by the magic of its existence, and I believed that everybody had a beautiful soul, even the disfigured—I saw no evil. I wish you could have known me then."

I paused; but Ferdinand, whose eyes were fixed upon me in feverish compassion, made no reply.

"Now," I continued, "all is so different; some people might go through all I did and remain inwardly as well as outwardly beautiful—you think I am beautiful, Ferdinand?"

"Oh, yes."

"Well, I could not. For a time I could not bear to be in the world at all, it hurt me so; the beauty of it and the charm were all gone. I prayed to be taken out of it, but I hadn't the courage, and one day I found that condition of mind had passed away, just like a black cloud that overspreads the sky so that one feels alarm, passes away. Are we not like the sky, Ferdinand?"

"You are," Ferdinand answered.

"It was after that terrible cloud, which was despair, wasn't it? passed away that, as I have told you before, the world became to me a spectacular show that I should attend as a circus and never take seriously. It is a show; there are many who take it for a workhouse, a convent and other serious things, but that is very foolish—it is a big theatre, that is all. Shakespeare said it long ago, but people forget; I do not. I make it my business not to forget. When I pass out of the show I shall have seen and realized it all. My heart has lived its life, it is no longer a hindrance to my powers of observation. It is the heart that blinds one's eyes; I no longer have a heart. I have but one purpose in existence—to find out what will please this"—and I touched my breast—"this material me. What will please my eyes, my ears, my palate, my touch, what will illumine the flesh! I live but to appear beautiful—to experience emotions and sensations. Why do you not interest yourself to

furnish me with new experiences? It is getting very dull here!"

"You find it dull?" Ferdinand asked, leaning toward me. And I closed my eyes as the magnetic spell he exerts rose up apparently in waves from the floor and closed about me like pale blue flames.

XII

"FERDINAND," I exclaimed, this morning, "as everything is deadly dull in London, let's do the deadliest and dullest—let's go to Madame Tussaud's! I've never been there; I want to reach some kind of climax, if it's only the climax of dulness!"

Ferdinand agreed, of course, and it was all just as I supposed. As we passed in under the striped awning I had the same kind of feeling I have when I enter church. Ten chances to one I am going to be bored and want to get out before it is over. It was worse. The lights were scattered and coldly clear, with no frosted shade or colored effect; they shone like ice on this deaf and dumb world of kings and queens and celebrities and criminals, giving one the feeling of walking among the gaily appareled and helpless dead. They are all there, all of England's men and women of high or low degree, famous or infamous, and a facetious guide chatted about them airily for the price of a half-crown or a shilling, as Ferdinand's mood might allow. This lean old fellow had been chatting this same way about his deaf and dumb helpless world for twenty-five years, he said, and I could plainly feel that he hoped as a final reward for his well-spent life to become a wax figure himself. He is perfectly unconscious of the fact that he is already one, wound up to walk around and repeat his few words.

It was only when we had paid an extra sixpence and entered the Napoleon department that the least interest awakened. This dead Napoleon was alive, and it seemed to me daily experiencing the shame of having his

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It was only when we had paid an extra sixpence and entered the Napoleon department that the least interest awakened. This dead Napoleon was alive, and it seemed to me daily experiencing the shame of having his

poor effects in the possession of the English displayed to a callous public by a chatty old man for the price of sixpence. Poor Napoleon! what more heart-rending picture than you lying there in your little iron bed, supposed to be dead, and with the Duke of Wellington, supposed to be alive, gazing upon you! That was the last picture we saw, and I came out of the place, dazed by the old tragedy made new, with tears in my eyes. There is no wax figure of Napoleon in his strength and power and glory in this entire department devoted to his effects, only the dead Napoleon with the live Wellington standing over him. We saw the mattress he died on, the stain of blood on the sheet, his cameo ring with the face of Josephine, the carriage he rode in to his coronation; the carriage he fled in at his downfall, the old chair upon which he sat at St. Helena, a piece of the tree under which he sat in that chair. We saw his clothing worn at various times, the silk stockings, the debonair hat, a tassel from the bed of Josephine, the old basin in which he washed his hands on board ship when going into exile, his buckles, his decorations, his swords, his dessert plates, his knife and fork, a little tooth-brush. A great shame overcame me to be thus curiously prying at the dead hero's personal effects. I was glad when we were at last in a hansom rolling through the pearly mist.

It was already dark, the hour being five; the street lights were being lit. I felt an intense loneliness, and wished Ferdinand would draw near to me and hold my hand, but he did not and we drove in silence. When we reached the hotel the afternoon music was playing sweetly, and we went into the palm-room. Ferdinand was in afternoon clothes and wore a white tie. He looked extremely handsome and distinguished and older. Ferdinand seems to be growing a year older each day now. I seem in his presence to be growing younger. What a strange couple we are, and how completely and entirely content I am to be forsaking everything for this unreal existence.

XIII

THE unreal existence reacted on me this evening. I never in all my life felt such an absolute demand for something substantial, and so I must needs take it out in eating. I eat for the mere eating's sake generally, or diversion of the flavor of some particular dish, or because it's the time to eat. But tonight it was an entirely new kind of eating. I blandly informed Ferdinand of my rapacious appetite with no desire for anything delicate or appetizing. The very thought of a sauce or salad revolted me, and I could not bear the sight even of a bottle of wine.

When the waiter arrived in response to Ferdinand's ring I waved aside the bill-of-fare.

"Order me," I cried, "a beefsteak, some potatoes hashed in cream, some thick slices of fresh bread and a pot of coffee!"

Ferdinand wrote out the order, and when this repast was set before me nothing more inviting ever met my gaze. Ferdinand was not included, and he sat opposite me with a half-amused smile as I devoured this meal like a savage. Between the mouthfuls of my steak and potatoes, I sat with my elbows on the table demolishing thick slices of bread well covered with butter, and I did not in the least mind Ferdinand watching me. I took keen delight in appearing before him a hungry animal. At the moment I was nothing else, and there was nothing left either in the dishes or on my plate. What strong appetites I have, and alas! how seldom I indulge them; how I play around them, a half-starved creature at best!

Tomorrow it will be *sauce piquante* and *sauce blanche* and all the rest of it again, for of course a hothouse plant can stand in the forest only for a few moments. And what did Ferdinand think of this animal me? Did I appeal to him or did I repulse him? I cannot tell. He merely watched me intensely, absorbingly, as he always does.

"Shall I order more?" was all he said, glancing with a smile at the empty dishes.

"No," I returned, and, rising, threw myself on the couch. The fire was a bank of red coals, the sofa-pillows were warm: I was tired, and I fell asleep. When I awoke it was two o'clock. Ferdinand was gone, but he had thrown over me a quilt from my bed and built up a good fire. I had a strange feeling as though we were shipwrecked and camping out. But I felt restless and when I was in bed I lay awake. I am afraid I can't remain much longer in this esthetic ecstasy; it is wearing on me; my nerves are going to pieces under it and I am not feeling strong. Civilization is enervating. The food, the real "feed," however, has done me good; I feel convinced that poverty has its charms. The beefsteak that the expectant family smells broiling has never been outdone by lobster Newburg cooked in the far-distant kitchen.

We waste much pity in this world. There are not so very many who do not appease hunger; and hunger, not food, is the thing!

XIV

YESTERDAY Ferdinand played.

The sunset was gray and gold; heavy, beautiful gray clouds with their edges burnished, and lakes of gold, seen beyond the leafless trees of the old park. It was very beautiful. Why attempt to describe Ferdinand's playing? Once his right hand had touched a chord my being thrilled, and I felt myself in the presence of a master. He took his seat in his gentle way and without comment or ostentation commenced his wonderful performance. Wonderful it was, because it was himself transformed into music and at times that self of the moment made music of me, too—fierce, sullen, angry, passionate chords that took the strength out of me. It is only too true I am not to be trusted under the influence of music, and while Ferdinand played I longed to drag my-

self over and become, as it were, a part of the instrument. But I lay quite still while gradually the room darkened, and the moments that rolled over me were passionate quivers. Ah! a moment may be almost anything and some of those moments while Ferdinand played cannot be translated. To be played to alone is the way to enjoy music. I remember years ago that a wonderful organist played to me thus. Always it was in the afternoons. We had the church alone. I sat in the body of the building in the farthest corner—"the Amen Corner"—and he at the extreme other end upstairs in the organ-loft, for the church was old-fashioned and the organ in the old-fashioned place. Those hours penetrated me, became a part of my being, and now in another way that pleasure is to be repeated. Some pleasures seem to travel toward us in chariots of gold. There are times when one has but to will to have. While Ferdinand played I fancied for a moment that I loved him, but when the music was finished and he stood before me pale, quiet and impassive, I knew that I had borrowed the idea to enhance my enjoyment.

Today at five he is to play again. What an indulgence—what inebriety! Ferdinand wishes me to sing, but I shall not. I no longer find joy in participating—I am now an onlooker only. Once I had a great respect for the performers of the world; now they appear ordinary. If Ferdinand played in public he would no longer interest me; were I to do anything, write a book to be published, paint a picture to sell, I would no longer respect myself. I have taken my seat in the orchestra-circle of the world.

I dragged Ferdinand to the theatre again last night. The play was dull, but well performed, and the audience, while tiresome—there is never any apparent vitality in a London audience—interested me. Why is it that Englishmen are so big and Englishwomen so little? The theatre was cold—quite common in London—but I managed to be comfortable by bundling up in my

ermine cloak. In this chill place the women, for the better part décolletée, extremely so, sat in apparent ease, like birds in Midwinter on frozen branches. One never understands about the feet of the little birds, and certainly I could not understand about the exposed flesh of these women. The young girls as a rule had long throats, sloping shoulders and inquisitive faces. The pretty ones all had the faces of little kittens.

"Ferdinand," I said, turning to him suddenly during an entr'acte, "when I am an old woman I will never wear black satin with jet trimmings!"

"You will never be an old woman," Ferdinand objected.

"Oh, yes, I will, but I will be charming! I will affect pale grays and white, and wear a great many jewels. I do not think I shall go about much. I shall read of things, and those who want to see me can come to me.

"I mean," I continued, glancing at him, "to keep a nice complexion, use expensive cosmetics and be always surrounded by flowers and exquisite lamps. Everything about me shall be of the finest texture and I shall have handsome young men and pretty young girls as servants, and beautiful musical boxes—I love the tinkle of music-boxes; it is so absolutely euphonic—and I will have bright-colored but silent birds about, in cages of gold, and beautiful white and black dogs with silky hair, but no cats. I don't care for cats. I will see people for a very short time, fifteen minutes being the limit, and I will be very vivacious and uniquely interesting during the short time. I have always paid great attention to the tones of my voice, and I shall guard against ever giving forth a sharp or cracked note. Thus I shall end my days!"

As I spoke a sudden realization of the uncertainty of existence swept over me and I rested a genuinely tearful glance upon Ferdinand.

"Alas! Ferdinand," I said, "I may never be that sweet old lady that I see in my dream."

XV

For three days Ferdinand has been ill. He went out on a wretched day, came back with a chill and the next morning he awoke with a burning fever and had already, before he notified me, sent for a physician.

I went in and found this cheerful person standing over him with a very grave face. But my eyes saw only Ferdinand. So charmingly young and interesting he looked, with only his head and arms above the coverlet, so innocent and boyish.

Never can I forget him lying, hot and flushed, with liquid, glowing eyes, as though the reflection of a blood-red cloud rested on him. While his room is bare and plain as that of a young priest, Ferdinand's apparel is of the finest, and his rose-colored silk pajamas accentuated his fever-lit beauty. His illness is impressed upon my mind like a vivid picture that sharply arrests one in a picture-gallery and holds one spell-bound. I shall always see this picture of Ferdinand with the flowers I brought in beside him and the electric light hid beneath its scarlet shade shining upon him—it is hung in my brain. And I shall always feel his burning hand that I sat and held, that magic hand with its long, slender fingers with their mysterious music concealed in them.

To release that perfect hand and go and look out of a window at the sky effects above, the gloom of a city below, and then back to the bedside where abnormal conditions prevailed, but where it seemed that the daily charm of Ferdinand was only heightened, was an experience that obliterated all things and put me in a delicious dream. Ferdinand's sufferings had no reality to me; he seemed merely to have been put into a theatric condition for my benefit. I bent over him last night and pressed my lips to his forehead, imprinting a good-night kiss as though he were a little child. I really felt that he was, but there was terrific strength in the hands that sprang to my shoulders and drew me down till our eyes met.

Kisses of the eyes—are they not very, very sweet?

Ferdinand is up today, pale and a bit scorched-looking, as though he had walked through a fiery furnace. I did not like to see him thus. I seem to demand of him that his appearance be a delight, as I demand of a musical instrument that it be in tune. The doctor says London during February and March is terrible, so I am naturally preparing, although he does not know it, to leave. And already I feel regret. Dull, uneventful, monotonous as it has been here, there has been tranquillity and peace. Almost at times reality has faded away and I have been in the condition of neither expecting nor desiring, as one might be if, having stepped into some light boat, it rose above the sea and sailed between it and the sky. Perhaps the fogs and mists have something to do with this. When one neither anticipates nor desires, a condition very near to happiness has been reached. These quiet rooms; the sunset outside; the flowers that have given out their sweetness and died in them for my sake; the music that has pulsed the air and my being and become still; the fires that have glowed and burned out; the lights that have been turned on and off; the nights that have arrived so early; the days that have lingered so briefly; the beauty of Ferdinand that has glowed and paled; his love that has shone like a veiled star has made existence unreal, at times ecstatic.

XVI

THE sun came out this morning and shone quite dazzlingly. It was such an unusual event that I felt like a prisoner suddenly liberated from a gloomy cell, who finds the daylight in his face. The air was very warm and balmy and the doctor agreed to a drive, so Ferdinand and I were out for an hour in a hansom. We passed through some dingy streets where the despair and sadness of some wretched, half-clothed souls, men and women,

filled me almost with terror. In no other place are such faces to be seen—faces of lost souls, the faces of beings who crave liquor and find in it no cheer; faces upon which negative agony and unconscious hopelessness are written in pale blue ink. There are hardened faces, too, in London, but it is not these that haunt me. It is these sad, vacant countenances that seem to tell of centuries of hunger of the body, faces that cry out to you that never has one replete hour come to the cadaverous beings who carry them about. Sometimes one of these sad souls will shamle up to open the cab door for you, and you toss him a penny. Oftener they stand on corners or against fences, their pale eyes fixed beyond what is about them. The grayish-looking old churches and buildings, leaden and dreary, the tall, unresponsive homes of the élite, are the backgrounds for these faces. Over all today the sun shone and the balmy breeze played. I said little to Ferdinand, my mind filled with the thoughts that the street scenes produced, and also with the sadness. Finally, however, I asked abruptly, "Of what are you thinking?"

He started. "Of a kind of love that I am sure would not interest you," he answered promptly.

"What kind?"

"A love in which there is no desire, because it is fulfilled within itself," said Ferdinand. "A love whose existence is its own reward. I have seen," he went on a little dreamily, and probably taking up the thought I had interrupted, "roses blooming too daz- zlingly beautiful to be plucked, roses too triumphant to fall under the hand of the executioner. I wanted merely to walk in the garden where such roses bloomed to see them day by day in sunshine and in storm, to catch a breath of fragrance as I pass their way, fragrance that was a gift to the world, but not especially to me. You understand love like that?"

"Oh, yes," I replied cheerily. "I knew an old maid once who delighted in going to people's houses when there was to be a party just to see the table when it was set and spread. She al-

ways left before the people assembled around it to demolish things."

"She must have been a very sweet old maid," said Ferdinand.

"She was sensitive and imaginative."

We sat in silence a while after this. The grass of the park we were driving beside was quite green and some straggling black leaves still hung upon the trees. There were few people about and a feeling of loneliness that a bright, clear day in Midwinter brings was upon me. I felt for a moment like revealing myself to Ferdinand, telling him of the leaves that had been plucked from his rose, of the rough handling it had received, but since it was perfect in his sight, why enlighten him?

"I think we had better not discuss the subject of love," I said presently, in a rather dejected voice.

"But why not? We discuss all other subjects—art, music, the drama, then why not love?" There was suppression in Ferdinand's voice that almost lent it a tremor.

"Discussed love is like London when the mists are dispelled," I replied. "When the mists are on, London may be anything one chooses to have it. When they are lifted!" I threw up my hands. "Let us live in the mist and the uncertain lights that gleam and disappear through it. I like to watch those uncertain lights whose environment is obscured, lights that do not belong to me, never will, that I do not even want, but that shine mysteriously for my benefit."

"The other day," said Ferdinand, smiling, "you called me a poet."

"You are. I am not." I felt a flush come to my cheeks as though I were defending myself. "I am a materialist whose eyes have quickened to the beautiful things of the world—all the beautiful effects."

"But once?" said Ferdinand, leaning toward me for an instant.

"I was an idealist—a transcendentalist—but life shattered all that for me. Tell him to take us around this park again, it is so sweet today, isn't it?—and I want to tell you about a little doll I had once."

"It was a very little, insignificant doll," I went on when Ferdinand had spoken through the tiny opening overhead, "not quite so tall as your second finger, but it had golden hair; only china hair—it wasn't a wonderful doll at all—and blue eyes. The little body was stuffed with sawdust and she had red shoes on, china shoes, too, but in my eyes that doll was all in all for me to worship. I expended my heart's best adoration on her. When one arm was broken I wept, but still adored, when a leg was broken I still adored, and so on till both arms and legs were gone and the sawdust poured from the wounds. Still I looked at the golden hair and the blue eyes, and adored. At last the paste dried under the neck of the little doll and the head and shoulders came off and the sawdust poured out of the body."

"I looked upon the wreck, and a great sadness filled my child's heart. It has been so all through my life. The ideals upon which I expended devotion went to pieces and I have stood gazing at the wrecks. I no longer believe in the endurance of anything beautiful. If I look upon a rose such as you spoke of as blooming in your dream garden I realize how short a while it has to be beautiful, and so its beauty is a sign of ugliness. For that reason I grasp eagerly at what the moment presents. I believe in nothing, Ferdinand, except what the moment presents. I am without faith, without hope, I care not for faith or hope—I want the present moment. I look on God as the author of a great play, and I am thankful that I was not cast for the part of a scullion, that is all. If I had been I would have peeled the vegetables and washed the dishes well. I do well what I have to do, don't you think so, Ferdinand?"

"What do you have to do?"

"Why, I have to make myself attractive, surround myself with the beautiful, expend my smiles. I do all that, do I not? I have to exhale love!"

"You do that, yes."

"Well, that is my part. I often wonder, though, since it was possible to make a flower like me, why the weeds were made. But I try not to wonder; it is not my part to wonder, but to be."

"It must be very interesting to be but you," smiled Ferdinand.

"It is so wonderful and mysterious to be anyone," I said as our cab reached the hotel.

XVII

I WONDER why it is that London seems to me the abandoned city of its past inhabitants and the people I see passing and repassing in the streets merely ghosts? Do what I may, nothing takes any hold on me.

I went with Ferdinand to look at the streets in the late afternoon as I always do in New York at Christmas time, and I have not been able to find cheerful sights. The shops appear to me cold, the arrangement of things inartistic and uninviting. I cannot stand, as I do at home, and pick out things suitable for my various acquaintances; there is no Christmas thrill of excitement in the air. I wonder what the people are moving about for. There isn't anything that I haven't tried to do to get up the spirit of the season, the kind of spirit we have in America. I don't seem to find it. We dismissed our cab at St. Paul's because I saw a lot of people going in, and entered for the sake of what might be going on there. The great place was barely lighted, and a handful of people were sitting patiently in the vast gloom. I sat expectant, hoping at least for some inspiring music, but when the organ at last sounded, I recognized no master hand. The preacher appeared finally through a side-door, followed by grave-looking men who were to sing in place of boys. I felt that I could not endure the sound of these big men bellowing forth, and motioned to Ferdinand to leave. We left silently and when I reached the outside I felt

that I had barely escaped witnessing an execution.

Every Thursday this handful of people assemble thus. I don't believe Christ would remain any longer than I did. I suggested to Ferdinand that we walk and try to see something.

So we did, and finally came into a street where a wretched collection of half-starved beings are allowed to stand outside the curb in the gutter and offer their wares. These things are offered for a penny, or two pennies at the most, and I attempted to get up that much desired Christmas feeling by making silly purchases and lining Ferdinand's pockets. But I felt no gaiety, London inspires none, and I retired to a shop-window and with my back to it gazed on the line of human beings standing there before me in the gutter, each with his little tray of glittering, tawdry, useless wares. Above these trays what faces!—faces that were masks of misery, faces of consumptives, faces lost in their crimson blotches of disease, faces of young girls, sharp and sinful and hopeless, or round and vicious, impudent faces of boys that were like the countenances of old, forsaken men, faces of old men that were like hollow caverns in which burned feebly watery, half-sightless eyes. Sometimes two women gossipped together, an old sinner and a young sinner; two half-starved looking boys paused in their efforts at selling to light cigarettes. And there they stood, from morning till night, I was informed, under the eye of policemen, who walked silently up and down, shifting them at will, higher or lower, but always seeing that they stood in the gutter. I found myself clinging to Ferdinand's arm, horror-struck.

"Oh, Ferdinand," I breathed, "why are we, you and I, so blessed? Why do we not have to stand hopeless in gutters?"

Why, why? Oh, the eternal why of the misery of others? But quite naturally I entered the cab that Ferdinand signaled, and quite naturally I ordered my favorite wine for

dinner and breathed in the odor of the flowers on the table and looked on at the men, clean and wholesome in their evening-clothes and the women bejeweled and glittering and clothed in silk and velvet and priceless lace. But again I asked, "Why are we, Ferdinand, you and I, not standing there in the gutter?"

"You are very pale," he answered.

"Am I?" I said, and in the crowded place I let the tears that sprang to my eyes roll down my cheeks. Only Ferdinand, however, saw these tears that I quickly wiped away. They were, those immediate tears, for an old man, a noble-looking old man, who sold a little mouse in a trap around which a cat ran. Poor, dear old man, how were you caught in the trap, how did it come about that you stand in the gutter line?

This is London, and over and above it always the mist and fog and the gloom that seem to descend from heaven to cloud its awful misery.

XVIII

FOR over two weeks I have recounted nothing about either Ferdinand or myself, and yet we are still part of this hotel and hotel life. We eat as before, quite cheerfully now, in the pretty sitting-room where Ferdinand can by merely leaning back sound the chords that I wish to hear, and we ride up and down in the elevator, glance in our letter-box as we go by, have cabs called and take them, appear occasionally in the evening in the dining-room below and quite often in the palm-room for the beverages and music. As I recall this I seem to see myself and Ferdinand as on a cinematograph and it interests me to watch us. I note my careless swaying walk, full of passionate movement. I note Ferdinand's, graceful and elastic, full of spiritual ecstasy. I seem to be in a theatre, a red-papered, lurid kind of theatre, watching ourselves, and I wonder what we (they) are doing together, always appearing at places and

disappearing. He is in love with her. Oh, it is plain to see that, but she, that full blown rose of a woman, what are her feelings toward this youth?

Does she love him? No, I answer, but herself through him. I study this woman passing and repassing before my eyes, always at ease, always costumed dreamily, as it were, in a manner full of charm. I see a black fur encircling her throat, her face appearing above it, creamy and a bit wearied, but rich in interest in self and what she can experience and feel. I see the scarlet rose or the drooping plume in the hat above the clear, lake-like eyes, or the delicate lace that falls from the shoulders. I see the jewels flashing on the smooth, polished skin, I see all the personality of the woman in evidence, and then I seem to see behind the cinematograph the home in which this woman was born, the front porch and the back porch, the rose-bush near the front porch and the pigeon-house near that and the pigeons alighting on the ground; and I see the stable outside the palings, and the cow-shed near that and the cows being milked at sundown. And I see a thousand things not in keeping with the woman at all, and I wonder at the evolution of a female creature.

Thousands of miles, and thousands of years, it seems, lay between the seat in the theatre before the cinematograph and the little house situated in a large square of earth where flowers grew, where violets were hid under their leaves in the corners of the garden, and snowdrops peeped up through the snow. Oh, sweet, wondering-eyed little girl, how dead, dead, dead you are!

I see Ferdinand as he exists on the cinematograph. I cannot even picture the childhood of this young man following in the footsteps of the gentle but dangerous woman.

She looks upon him tenderly; there is no impatience in her attitude. Why is this woman so tender in her attitude? It is very simple to answer—he stimulates her imagination. He is a sweet, rose-tinted mystery that surrounds her life with a pale halo. She does not

made him impatient with me; I seemed rather a fool in his eyes, so this time he told me that I was a fool and all my possible extravagance in the way of light had been taken into account and had to be paid for by him, that if I burned all the lights night and day the amount of light expended wouldn't be up to what he had already agreed to pay for it. He was a man who understood the worst part of humanity perfectly; it was this that caused people to call him clever, and it was this cleverness that finally became unbearable to me. It was this influence that was destroying me!"

A flash of the old agony crossed my countenance. I saw it by Ferdinand's expression.

"Well, though," and I laughed nervously, "he opened my eyes to many things!"

"Until," said Ferdinand, "you finally closed them to conscience?"

"No, until I lived above it, outside it, so that I began to live for myself, to have some conscience about my own existence. I found that I must not put myself in the place of other people, but be my own self in my own place. And that is what I am, Ferdinand—myself in my own place!"

"And what am I?"

"You are yourself in your place!"

"And I should have no conscience either?" he asked.

I looked at him surprised. "Of course not," I felt bound to answer. "If conscience is awakened for one in another that other owes a debt of gratitude. Conscience sleeps until, rest assured, there is some excitement on hand."

"And you so value excitement?"

"Yes, as I used to value tranquillity."

"And you have absolutely no conscience concerning me?"

"None whatever. You owe me eternal gratitude for inspiring—well, even the music you perform, anything that produces emotion." I rose and put out my hands. "Come, let us be sensible."

He took my hands and looked at them a long time, then put them from him abruptly.

"There is something," he said, "about you of the human animal who has reverted to the savage state."

"You are quite correct," I replied. "It is the savage whose eyes are opened, whose ears are keen, whose heart is callous. Yes, I am savage—life has made me one!"

"And how does a savage feel?" inquired Ferdinand.

I took my seat again, bent forward and looked at him. "Very gloriously at times, rather desperately at others. And a savage thinks of death—that is, this savage does, far oftener than you might suppose. I have never ceased believing that sunsets are heaven's gates opened a short while. I still feel that it is all like that inside with music created by ten thousand Wagners. That was my child's idea of heaven and it still is, and I sometimes momentarily yearn to enter into all that glory. I see myself dressed in white with a crown of stars on my head, passing in, and all the music suddenly bursting in my ears. But then I quickly tell myself that I must not anticipate, for perhaps after all this world may be heaven too. And I turn all my attention on the present world, I see it lying on the ocean and all that is in it and above it, and Ferdinand, when one does that, when one *can* do it, it is so marvelous that it takes the breath away. And it isn't really necessary to tear about when one is in this state. You can see as much in this little room as you can in a ball-room, and hear as much music as you can at an opera. You can bring the whole world and everything to you all in a second. That is what I often strive to do, and to see myself in the midst of it all without changing my position. And you help me to do this, Ferdinand!"

Ferdinand leaned back and studied me, and the glances from his eyes touched me from head to foot. I was in a scarlet kimono with purple flowers embroidered on it. There is as much

presence to attend to business, write letters, and do the things that he is engaged to do. Sometimes he does these things after he has bidden me good night, and in the morning I feast on the tired look in his eyes. Another's presence may become a more necessary habit than drink or a drug. What if Ferdinand should be called away—have to leave me? I felt myself grow pale at this thought.

XIX

WORLDLY circumstances and conditions do not intrude upon the emotional existence that Ferdinand and I are experiencing. We went the other night to a well-known Italian restaurant. It was as gay as anything in London can be; still, the dome and pillars were heavy, the baskets of flowers too large, they were all gilded, and the ribbons too broad. But there was a gallery upstairs from which one could look down, and there was plenty of light and gay members of all classes of society were present.

We chose a well-located table and I expected to entertain myself by the usual sights of such a place. But soon it all seemed floating away from me. I saw people and ribbons and flowers as from a great distance, and I cannot recall, although I must have known some, any of the pieces that the orchestra played. I remembered Ferdinand opposite me, in evening-clothes, looking pale; a few faces floated above his head followed by some women's clothes, and I know that the waiter was like a black twisted line that every now and then encircled us.

While seated at this place I made a discovery about Ferdinand. He has the eyes and lips of Correggio's Christ. The whole face is not dissimilar, only in place of the pained despair of the countenance there is ecstatic hope. It is not a definite hope, but hope that is like a light that some great blessing is to befall him. Alas! I pray that no misfortune or disaster may write despair also on his bright countenance.

Ferdinand asked me abruptly this morning to tell him something about my conscience.

"Conscience?" I asked, somewhat surprised.

"Yes," he answered; "how your own acts affect your mind's consciousness. You appear to me never to suffer at all about anything, to possess not even the ordinary regrets of the ordinary person. You bloom like a flower; how is it possible!"

I thought for some while before I answered, but not because he had put a question to me that in any way startled or aroused me. This matter of conscience with me has long been dissected and put aside.

"It was excess of conscience," I finally replied, "that developed me into the creature you see today. When I was a child, and long after, I was so conscientious that I was almost a bore to less endowed ones. I went about holding the golden rule before my eyes, never forgetting to put it into practice. I applied it to every act of my life. For instance, if I became an inmate of a hotel I was careful of everything in the room and never failed to lower my lights when leaving my apartments as I would have liked others to do were I keeping a hotel. I was always putting myself in the other person's place and treating myself fairly and tenderly in that position. I put myself in the place of my maid, the laundress—oh, how tired I used to feel being the laundress!—there were times when I wept over my tedious, abominable tasks and the weariness of myself when at last I rested. I put myself in the place of the horse I drove, the dog on the mat outside the door shivering, the birds when the Winter's snow covered the ground. I was in the sorrows of the whole world, so that I almost forgot to live for myself at all."

"Well?" Ferdinand asked as I paused.

I started, for my mind was traveling over the past.

"One day," I continued, "when I was lowering the hotel lights my husband became annoyed; such things

made him impatient with me; I seemed rather a fool in his eyes, so this time he told me that I was a fool and all my possible extravagance in the way of light had been taken into account and had to be paid for by him, that if I burned all the lights night and day the amount of light expended wouldn't be up to what he had already agreed to pay for it. He was a man who understood the worst part of humanity perfectly; it was this that caused people to call him clever, and it was this cleverness that finally became unbearable to me. It was this influence that was destroying me!"

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Ferdinand leaned back and studied me, and the glances from his eyes touched me from head to foot. I was in a scarlet kimono with purple flowers embroidered on it. There is as much

excitement in lurid attire as in lurid scenes.

"How do I help you?" he finally asked.

"Ah! that is it," I said. "How can I tell?"

"But try," he urged, leaning toward me.

"There are times," I said, half absently, "when sitting perfectly still in your presence, that I seem to be a star and you a lightning-storm playing around me. I am drowned by sound and rain and flashing lights, I feel myself one moment perishing, the next fainting and the next gasping for breath, and then again—"

"Yes?" asked Ferdinand, bending still further toward me and speaking eagerly.

"I feel a most heavenly calm spreading over me—through me—but the calm is all lit up, it shines so that my eyes close in a kind of rapture. It is with difficulty that I arouse myself from this intoxicating experience—it is, well, almost like a trance." I paused and then asked quickly, "Can you tell what it is?"

"No, no, but go on and explain all this to me more fully."

"Well, did you never lie on the seashore in the sun when it was not too hot, but gently so, with the warm sand beneath your body and the blue sea beyond and the blue sky above and feel all things vanish from you except your own feelings and a dreamy knowledge of vivid coloring? It's like that, only, as I have said, it's all lit up, and there is no sand and no sea and no sky, no coloring at all, just a bright light and myself lying in and on that light. There are other feelings that I have when in your presence, Ferdinand!"

My eyes were shining as I talked and Ferdinand's were shining in mine.

"What are they?" he breathed.

"I see sometimes a violet atmosphere that trembles so that I cannot keep my eyes fixed upon it, but that is so beautiful and that fills me with such rapture I long to expire in it.

It is a kind of ecstasy. What do you feel in my presence?"

"You!"

The single word and the way in which he spoke it caused me to thrill as when he sometimes strikes a sharp chord on the piano. I rose and shook the vibration from me.

XX

YESTERDAY the sun shone all day and the effect upon me was beneficial. I quite got out of my maudlin state and spent the day brightly. At seven o'clock I made myself ravishing in evening toilet, allowing Ferdinand, when I was quite dressed, to catch a glimpse of me through the door that I opened half-way upon some trifling pretense.

I think a woman is never more attractive than when she stands thus, beautiful and glowing, the personation of femininity.

We entered the crowded dining-room a few minutes later, and the whole scene seemed to me to be dazzlingly cold and splendid, like ebony inlaid in pearl, or marble in diamonds. We had a corner table where the floral decorations were tea-roses and maiden-hair fern and the little silk shade over the electric light was old-gold with silver fringe. I felt a kind of reckless abandonment toward life at that moment, and an innate rejoicing that sin had been allowed to flourish all through the centuries like a persistent, uncontrollable fire that no effort of nature or contrivance of man could quench.

"Ferdinand," I asked gaily after I had swallowed a few sips of the wine, that was pungent and seemed to me like frozen fire, "what is sin?"

"Perhaps the limit of man's strength," Ferdinand answered, speaking as gaily as I.

"Then you don't think sin sinful?"

"Oh, it must be that!"

"Considered from the standpoint of missionaries our drinking this wine is sinful, isn't it?"

"Quite so; the money spent on it should go to the plate."

"But I believe the missionaries enjoy traveling as much as we enjoy wine."

"So of course," said Ferdinand, "we are all miserable sinners."

"Sinners," I answered protestingly, "not *miserable* sinners!"

"Are sinners ever miserable?" Ferdinand laughed.

"Perhaps not while they are sinning." I waved my hand. "In the eyes of some of those missionaries, everybody in this room is a sinner!"

"Exactly!"

"Well, I like us!"

"So do I," declared Ferdinand. "In sin lie all the mysteries of bliss."

"Ferdinand!" I exclaimed, and he laughed.

We were silent a while, but presently he remarked coldly: "Happiness is a diffusive thing; it floats around one caressingly, one is never quite sure of it, but bliss is the concrete thing, the definite; it is the essence of refined sin."

"You can't prove that!" I cried, entering into the spirit.

"But you can!"

"Oh, a woman never proves, she only knows—I only know. But you are right." I put my elbows on the table and felt the sweet drowsiness that comes to my eyes when sleep is near. "When sin," I said, "has reached the point of bliss there is no sin, for the vulgar has been eliminated. There is no sin in kisses born either of the early morning light or the salt sea blowing in, or the stars lighting the heavens, or the sun blistering the earth, or the moon sensuously sailing. There is no sin in kisses born of the intoxication of colored lights and soft hangings and perfumes and low couches and golden wines and beautiful eyes and beautiful mouths." I started slightly at my own words and rubbed my eyes with my palms. "Ferdinand," I exclaimed, "what am I saying? There are times when I feel that I am your mouth-piece, voicing your thoughts or saying what you will me to say."

Ferdinand looked upon me in his critical way and said nothing. His lips

were scarlet from the wine and I feasted upon the vivid color. I am hungry at times for Ferdinand's lips, as one is hungry for a beautiful fruit ripening in the sun.

I saw such a fruit once—a beautiful peach hanging tempting and resplendent in its green leaves. I noticed it first long before it was ripe, just as one exquisite cheek was coloring to a fleshy pink. Every morning I went out to look at it, eager in its development, seeing it day by day become larger and fuller and more gloriously colored. At last one whole side, the side that the sun touched, was a deep, passionate red and I looked long at it that day, almost deciding to pluck it and strike into its deliciousness with my white teeth. I felt that plunge, tasted the sweet juice of its perfection and, almost in fear of the wonder, stole away. One more day in the sunlight, I said, one more night in the cool moonlight, one more glorious sunrise with the song of birds above it—and then mine! At the hour I had fixed upon I went for my peach, this peach that I had watched grow and become perfect for me and—it was gone! Seated on a bench near-by a wicked, common, vulgar little girl, the child of the cook, was eating it deliberately. She had climbed the tree and stolen it.

Alas! if one day I should find my beautiful young Ferdinand plucked by some vulgar hand—snatched away from me by one wholly unworthy of the prize! I trembled at the thought and involuntarily put out one hand to him. I had been in a dream, but all the while I felt his eyes on my face.

"What is it?" he asked.

"Nothing," I whispered, for my voice failed me. "Only, Ferdinand, you are very beautiful in my eyes at this moment. I want something of you tonight—it is as though all the lights have suddenly gone out of this room—let us go upstairs and you play something for me."

I sat trance-like while Ferdinand went through the formalities of signing cheques and feeding the waiter, and then we went upstairs, mounting the

broad stairs through choice. When we entered the room Ferdinand immediately began to arrange to play for me, fixing my pillows, putting out certain lights and placing some roses where he supposed I would like them. Then he stood before me a moment, tall and graceful, and I thought of all the music shut up in that vibrating personality and trembled like a child, expectant yet half-afraid. Ferdinand saw this and his gaze became compassionate.

"You are sure you wish the music?"

"Oh, yes, very, very sure."

My voice was a whisper and he turned and went over to the piano.

The first chord he struck, while low and tender, vibrated every nerve; tears gushed to my eyes and burying my face in the pillows of the couch I burst into sobbing.

"I told you," exclaimed Ferdinand, springing forward and bending over me, "you could not stand it."

XXI

WHILE I am not strong, nothing could be more beautiful, more wonderful than the condition of my mind at present. I have but to close my eyes for the most intoxicating visions to pass before me. Yesterday it was field after field, hill after hill, of purple flowers all swaying and moving in the gentle wind of a sullen gray day. For hours I lay upon my couch before the fire reveling in this beautiful triumph of color and gloom. It was impossible in this vision to see the sky, for only the gray vapor hung above. But those flowers, purple as the mid-day sun, sometimes in gloom, sometimes lit up by a shaft of light that penetrated the mist, were always blooming, blooming, blooming, as far as the eye could rove. No trees, no other flowers, no bushes, no roads, no human beings, only purple flowers luxuriantly close together a foot above the earth, undisturbed—more beautiful than the sea!

There are other visions of distant villages built upon white sand where the sun shines and dazzles me, and of a blue sea where sailing-vessels are numerous, but where not a sail is white, but all blue or green or pink, or of forests of trees where sapphires hang thick in the foliage and flash in a blinding sun. My joy in these visions is excessive. There is music in colors that steal into me and vibrate my soul. These color-visions that I have are like the effect of some narcotic in its first delicious stages. I am, in fact, as one charged with some rare fluid that intoxicates to madness. But my face is growing pale, what I have always called the rich look that causes me joy when sometimes I behold myself, is vanishing. Sometimes there are purple circles beneath my eyes; I am a sense-sick creature given up to a damaging indulgence. When I wish to rise from my couch I put out my hands to Ferdinand and smile plaintively, and I am never dressed before one o'clock, filled with a lassitude that is feeding upon my vitality. If I should make these confessions to Ferdinand I wonder what he would say to them? There are times when his observation of me is painful. What does he think, and can he read how I feel? He has become composed in his manner, stronger in every way, and very often looks upon me compassionately. Why? I begin not to be able to read Ferdinand. A day or two ago I came upon him in close, it appeared to me to be intimate, conversation with a young man. He explained it to me by stating that he had discovered the young man to be an American, and that Americans like to talk to each other over here. They looked, however, to me, like intimate friends.

It could not be possible that Ferdinand would deceive me about anything. I shall question him more closely about this stranger and also about himself. Ah! how very, very tired I am! I am like a creature living upon the perfume of flowers.

XXII

To escape Ferdinand and experience a relief from my over-changed self I have been tearing about for the past few days with an English old maid. We have lunched and been to the shops and matinées and torn about in cabs, and discussed books and plays and actors and actresses. But what is there in all that? Nothing. I am now body as well as sense weary, and I am lying in bed resting, or trying to rest.

I have separated myself almost entirely from Ferdinand, declining to talk with him on any pretext, remaining shut up in my own room and passing him in the halls and bowing as to a stranger. Yesterday as I passed our sitting-room I heard him playing, violently, passionately; running scales, striking staccato chords. I paused at the door, breathless. Other persons were lingering in the halls listening. My impulse was to fling open the door, present myself to Ferdinand and tell him to take me as a free and perfect gift unto himself. And I stood outside the door vibrating with my generous inclination and then I crept by, came softly into my own room, flung myself down on my bed and cried. As though Ferdinand felt my presence and my mood, his music became calmer, sweeter, until finally it soothed and I fell asleep. Ah! how beautifully he plays!

I am back to my old ways. Why struggle—why deny myself? What did I gain? Unrest, pure and simple.

I have long conversations now with Ferdinand and that last for hours, sometimes late into the night. I have told him many things about my life and he has told me a very few about his own. He is a Kentuckian by birth and certainly they have very queer ideas and strange ways concerning their treatment of women. While it is quite chivalrous it is almost as though woman were a non-responsible creature. It is the man who is held responsible for all her misdeeds. If

she abandons the beaten track the man pays the penalty. He pays for her misdemeanors with his life.

Perhaps, after all, this is best—right. *Is a woman responsible?* Am I responsible for the exquisite condition that Ferdinand's presence incites, am I in any way capable of resisting this condition? I could send Ferdinand away. But could I? And if I could, why should I? Perhaps it is some such power—invisible, of course, to us, that day by day crimson the rose-leaf or lends it its particular color, whatever that color may be.

Perhaps Ferdinand is tinting my soul, when I experience my exquisite emotions, to some rare and wonderful color. I feel this—that something beautiful is going on. I feel also that it is something so delicate, sheer, transparent, gossamer-like, opalescent, that touch would destroy it. I fear this. I am reminded as I write this of bright, first-of-May mornings, when we children had ourselves awakened to test our fortunes with the white of an egg poured into a tumbler of water while the sun was rising. The egg descends immediately to the bottom of the glass, but almost instantly it begins to rise, until finally an exquisite, shadowy, but perfect picture is formed. Sometimes the sea opens up with beautiful fairy ships, and then one's sweetheart is to be a sailor of the seas; or if a palace is formed one is to marry a prince. The hand that holds the glass must be steady and one must face the rising sun. I used to stand thus in a kind of ecstasy, in my childhood days, fearing to move or breathe, dreading an approaching footfall lest a jostle destroy my present and blight all my future.

Just so I tremble now lest this tottering picture I hold in my hand shake, or my eyes fall from the rising sun. It is so perfect, this experience of mine, so entrancing, uplifting, such a fairy tread on enchanted ground, such a transport into upper, almost invisible realms, that there are moments when I feel unworthy of such rare bliss. There is magnetism of souls that contact of body must destroy. I can see the

smile on the face of a friend of mine as I pen these lines. "My dear girl," he would say, "you are awfully hard hit, terribly hard hit on your young secretary; it rather amuses me, but go in for it! Experience, no matter what kind, is life's true development." But while my friend, this man to whom I refer, is brilliant, and has had many brilliant experiences of his own that have developed him into something that, at times, the world wonders at, he cannot understand that there is something beyond experience, some things that experience must not touch, as there are pallid flowers, exquisite and perfect when gazed upon at a distance, inhaled from a distance, that the touch of a finger or one hot breath instantly destroys. Is Ferdinand such a flower as this?

Ferdinand asked me last night when we were sitting before the fire dreaming, to tell him something of my married life. He said it was so impossible to consider me in the light of a married woman—as a creature not in every way detached, that this other nebulous consideration troubled him. We were very warm and comfortable, relying on the firelight and one little flame over on the desk, a bronze woman holding a torch beneath a red silk sunshade, for light. Some day when Ferdinand is far away from me I can look on this page and recall this night I am describing: the pinkness and crimson of the room, with the gray mist outside hanging against the windows like birds' wings, the bronze woman with the beautiful bust protected by the inappropriate red parasol and the bunch of white narcissus beside her. And I shall recall always the look on Ferdinand's face that I cannot describe.

"Tell me something of your married life," he repeated in answer to my silence, for Ferdinand and I are no longer conventional as to the questions we put to each other. "I mean," he said, "of yourself in connection with marriage."

"Whatever you appreciate in me, Ferdinand," I said sadly in a low voice, "was a bore to him. It seems to me that that tells the whole story."

"It does, but I should like it in more words."

Ferdinand has a queer way of forcing from me expressions that at times I resent, but can never resist, so I burst forth:

"He wanted a woman to shine for him in public places, and you know I really shine only in the dark. In public a veil seems to rise up from my feet and gradually cover me all over. But," a wan smile crossed my lips, "I tried, I did my best! I thought I was in love with him. Thinking one's self in love may be for a time the same as being in love, so we will say I was in love with him. And oh, I wanted very, very much to please him! And when I discovered that that was impossible, that there were men who desired many things in many women and that I could be only one of those things, and that there must be other women to be the other things, why, I think it rather took the strength out of me—broke my heart. You see, that was in the old days when I had very high ideals."

"Yes?" Ferdinand asked.

"Well, I haven't high ideals now—no ideals at all. I have refinement—I can't get rid of that, but not ideals. Why, they were just crushed like beautiful marble images in a mortar and thrown over the wall into the alley!"

"You mean he crushed them?"

"Not intentionally. My existence with him did it—just being where he was. My will—well, it was never powerful, whatever else, so it went to pieces; became, as I have said, crushed. Ah! the things that I did to hold myself together and make it a go with him! I think I did everything that a woman ever did to get on with a man! I was sensitive, I didn't want the world to know that I had failed. Following these lines I accepted anything from him, any kind of treatment, anything he chose to do, any kind of life he meted out. But think of it! He liked first to decorate and then exhibit me in public places to other women, vulgar women, to make them jealous. He told me this once when we were in one of those crowded Broadway restaurants

and he was drinking wine and in a merry mood. The things all paled before me and I nearly fainted, but I didn't; I never reached any climaxes with him. Don't you think it was terrible?"

"I do," said Ferdinand.

"But that wasn't the worst. He deliberately set to work to kill all the sentimentality of my nature, to weed out all the flowers in the garden of my being and leave only the vegetables and the weeds, and this, constantly going on, was slow murder; I felt myself perishing. But even so I hid my pain as best I could. I lied and lied and lied about my happiness, to my family, to his family, to my friends, to everybody! And oftentimes I could see by their faces that they knew that I was lying and that they pitied me. Well, that was worse than death—it was madness. I think he used to like having power over me, I think he used to like the color that sprang into my face when he flung jewels at me on the top of some cruelty. You see, he was very wealthy and that was one of the reasons he could be so cruel! Ah! how I learned to despise his gifts and having to go forth with a new jewel burning on my breast.

"I remember one particular evening. I was so tired of the glitter of the life we were leading that it hurt me as it hurts the eyes to fix them on a strong Summer sun. I felt I couldn't stand it, and that if only for that one evening he would sit with me in a subdued light and talk quietly to me of some of the things I cared about I would be happy, in a fashion. So I asked him, begged him; but he wouldn't, and we went out as usual. Isn't it a miracle, Ferdinand, that there are people whose only rest is sleep—a snoring sleep?"

Ferdinand smiled faintly, but I did not. I was back into things that were too real.

"But let us change the subject," I exclaimed. "What I am telling you isn't especially interesting."

"Go on!" said Ferdinand feverishly.

"Oh, it went on until finally it became unbearable. It was unbearable.

I found I couldn't go on as I was. I was like a person on the rack, fearing every moment I must cry out, having sworn not to, but always afraid. I was so bent, so horribly bent upon keeping on. I look back now and wonder at that, why I strove so to keep things going. At last—"

"Yes?"

"At last an idea that seemed a very brilliant one occurred to me."

"And what was that?"

"I decided that if I could make myself absolutely unworthy in my own eyes I could bear anything!"

"And so?" asked Ferdinand, whose eyes were upon me with excited interest.

"Oh, I thought about it a long while, thought it all out! You see, in spite of everything, I still believed that I was in love with my husband, even though I realized that he was killing me body and soul. I don't know why; I can't understand any of these things now; it was the youth in me, I suppose. Why does all this interest you?"

Ferdinand changed his position and moistened his lips. "It does," he said, leaning toward me. "Go on."

"Well, I did it. I did what I planned. I allowed myself to become interested in another man!"

Neither of us spoke for a long while after this. It was growing late, parties were coming up in the elevator and passing the door, chatting and laughing, and more cabs, the theatres being over, were rattling outside; there was quite a musical clatter of hoofs and bells, but all softened by the heavy air and closed windows.

Ferdinand said nothing, and the silence began to oppress me. I seemed to feel that Ferdinand was performing an operation on my soul, cutting into and unearthing every trace of disease, examining every scar.

"Order something," I cried out. "Let us have some wine and some sweets. Do you like chocolate eclairs? I do; I like them with sour wine!"

Ferdinand rang. But when he re-seated himself the silence became more oppressive.

"Can't you understand if one feels entitled to punishment it is easier to bear things?" I cried.

"No!"

"Well, that was the way it seemed to me, that if I despised myself I could bear anything. Perhaps other things influenced me—unconsciously, I mean; perhaps I wanted some tenderness, someone to confess to, someone who would listen to all the pain and misery and disappointment of my life. You see, as I told you, I was lying to everybody, just going about with my head up, lying, and I wanted to fall down at someone's feet and tell the truth, that I was a martyr hiding my burning flesh and never crying out. I say perhaps this was so—I don't know—it was the other thought that appealed to me—held me spell-bound and that became a passion!"

The boy brought the wine at this moment, and after it had been opened I sat with my fingers around the stem of the glass, looking into the fire.

In one brief moment the whole of my past swept through my mind. Then I looked up.

"Your presence must mean very much to me, Ferdinand," I said, "since I can go into these old memories. Once I could not do so at all; I couldn't even bear to think of anything, and so buried my thoughts, all my memories, and took up the present, bare and cold as ice though it was. Burying one's memories is the hardest task of all—to part with one's thoughts for the sake of keeping up with what seems to be nothing. I did it, though; I buried everything—not gradually, as you might suppose, but all in one day, as one goes to a funeral. Ah! how well I remember it. No funeral is like the funeral of one's memories. It was after I had said good-bye to everything that I became the being you know; it was then that I began to look on the world as a material thing, not a cloud realm. I began eagerly and hurriedly to take what it offered, consciously and greedily, as one goes into an orchard late in the afternoon with a basket to fill before the sun sets. The sun—my

sun—was already high in the heavens when I entered my apple orchard, and that's why I feel hurried in my task. Soon, very soon now it will begin to set; perhaps this very illumination of myself that has taken place since I knew you, dear, means that it has begun to set."

I drained my glass and had taken up the chocolate éclair, and I thought for a moment what a mockery it was to be unearthing old memories and filling myself with sweet things and drinking wine. But we do these things in life—it is one of the mysteries, one of the cruel phases.

Ferdinand did not drink; he sat in his chair looking at me as one might watch a strange new being that has risen out of the sea and might any moment disappear. I still experienced the feeling of a diagnosis, an analysis. All the tenderness had fled from Ferdinand's eyes; they were gray and he seemed working out some problem that I inspired, but in which I was not concerned.

Suddenly he seemed to awaken.

"And the result of your experiment—what effect did it have?"

"It failed."

"Why?"

"Because he fell in love with me and would not permit me to sacrifice myself. He respected my marriage vows. He was positive. It meant a divorce from my husband and our marriage or nothing."

"And what did you do?"

"I told my husband and that I intended to get the divorce."

"And he—your husband?"

"He had no ideals to judge me by and considered that we were in the same boat. Naturally, though, he went into a rage. But suddenly his mood changed, and he laughed ironically. 'I suppose now,' he said, 'you will come down off your pedestal.' I replied, 'No, I am now on a higher pedestal,' and that made him laugh more."

"And after that?"

"There was no after!"

"Why?"

"Because the next day the man who loved me and whom I had learned to love was dead. He has been dead three years. It was that—his death—that taught me how transitory life is, what a fleeting thing, and to grasp at it all the while, morning, noon and night! It made me, as I have told you, without giving the reason, the I—the woman you know. It was over quickly—one of those terrible automobile accidents. You know now why I won't ride in one. There was a wreck; I was in it, but I wasn't hurt—in three days he was dead. I never left the bedside and when it was over I went home. I don't remember going, but I found myself on the doorstep ringing the bell, and I saw the look of alarm that spread over the features of the footman who opened for me. He put up his hand as though to prevent my entering, but I pushed by him and went in. I was attracted by the sound of the piano and women's voices, and I walked straight to the drawing-room door and looked in. There was a girl seated at the piano playing, and three or four standing around her singing. They were chorus-girls, showily dressed, and they had on their hats. There were empty wine-bottles and glasses on the end of the piano. I do not know what I looked like as I stood there in the doorway—perhaps a ghost; certainly I did not feel like a human being. Everything that fell upon my ear or eye was mockery, strange, grotesque—and it was all new to me, as though I had stepped into another world. Sounds were sharp as I had never heard them, colors intensified until everything was a blinding, dreadful glare. The girls had been singing a comic song, some ragtime piece. At my appearance they stopped suddenly. I do not know how long I stood there gazing at them, they gazing at me, but I finally turned and dragged myself up the steps to my room. And then came that awful moment that comes at times to some when one has gone blind and yet sees, deaf and yet hears, insensible to feeling—conscious

yet unconscious. I have sometimes wondered whether the very glory of such a heaven as I pictured to you the other day, and for all eternity, is compensation for one of those moments."

My eyes ached into Ferdinand's as I talked. I could feel the blazing pain in them while he seemed to have fallen into a trance under the spell of my words. I began suddenly to feel weary, tired out.

"And after that?" he asked me, leaning forward and whispering. He poured more wine and handed it to me. I drank it eagerly.

"Many things followed, I suppose, but I don't remember very much about the next few months. I remember sitting about like a dead creature, staring before me unintelligently at inanimate objects—a chair, a table, a bed. My eyes were always open and I was always staring at something. I went nowhere. I had a vague feeling that I was being discussed, criticized, but such things made no impression on me. My husband came and went. He said little. I think the look in my face prevented. Why do you listen so feverishly to this old story—why does it interest you?"

"Never mind—it does. Why did that actress kill your husband?"

"I don't know—how should I know? It was all in the papers; you know as much as I do."

"What effect did it have on you?"

"None; I had already died, become the present me, before it happened. I remember the day, though—the day it occurred."

"Tell me of it."

"I was sitting in my room as usual, dumb, without any emotion. He stopped and looked in the door. 'My girl,' he said, 'I am sorry for you; you have brought it all on yourself, but damn it, I am sorry for you!' I remember that I looked him squarely in the face and burst into tears. It was his first word of sympathy; it came with a curse, but it was genuine. I never saw him after that—she killed him that night. You

know all about the trial, how she was freed and seen drinking wine that night in a restaurant in slippers with scarlet heels on them—how the papers talked of it. Perhaps he deserved it—who can say?—but it was horrible and she a murderer! How can you say that the world is not a cheap playhouse? How can one be serious about such a trashy, melodramatic thing as life, life that is but a short play, sometimes of one act, sometimes of four—rarely five!”

“To the stars of the drama,” said Ferdinand, “it is not a cheap playhouse, but a temple of gold and diamonds!”

I leaned nearer to Ferdinand and looked into his shining eyes. There seemed to be flames emanating from our two bodies and uniting.

“Tell me of that great playhouse, that temple of gold and diamonds,” I whispered. “Are we in it? I seem to feel this moment that we are. I see the gold shining and I see the diamonds blazing and I seem to be performing the part I performed before my soul perished. Oh, it is so beautiful, Ferdinand. I am sorry in this moment for all the suffering ones of the world, just as I used to be, and I want to forgive all the wrong of the world—not mine, but the whole world’s. I never felt like this before, not even in the old days. Give me your hands that are full of music, your eyes that are full of wine, your lips red and burning with holy fire. We are in the great playhouse—I know it, I feel it! Give me my part to perform! And choose yours.”

“Already we are performing our parts,” said Ferdinand, with a cold smile, “and we are great artists.”

His words and look chilled me and I drew back and stared at him.

“I feel very happy,” I said, “or mad—which is it?—I do not know which, or what it is. I think I remember once when I was a little child and it had rained for days and suddenly the sun burst out and shone on the wet green earth in a great dazzling splendor, I felt like this. But never since!”

I put out my hands to Ferdinand in a groping way, as the blind do. Fer-

dinand rose to his feet and again at last I saw the look in his face that I had seen that one afternoon, the flush, the sullen gleam in the eye, the swollen vein on the brow.

“I very nearly killed a man,” he whispered, bending his face above mine, “for taking advantage of a woman’s mood. Go now and rest; you are tired.”

“No, no,” I cried out, “I am not tired! I never was less tired. What do you mean by saying you nearly killed someone for taking advantage of a woman’s mood?” I laughed hysterically. “You, so gentle!”

“I am not gentle,” Ferdinand breathed. “I do not come of a gentle race—you have been mistaken.”

“You have been gentle to me.”

“Yes, I have been gentle to you.”

“And why?”

“You were a woman unconsciously under my protection and in my power. Had there been no other reason that in itself were sufficient.”

“In your power?”

“Yes!”

“How?”

“Through your temperament and my knowledge of it.”

I laughed again; I had recovered myself. “Come,” I said, with a tint of sarcasm, “you interest me—this new you!”

“I am not a new me. You may have a new idea concerning me. You have had many.”

I did not like Ferdinand’s way of talking; it made me feel hysterical again—his self-control, his repression; and besides, my vanity was suffering.

“Come, come,” I said recklessly, “since we can be nothing else, let us be merry.” He yielded and I took my old seat on the couch in front of him. “I said, let us be merry. Do you know why I said that? I still feel myself in the great playhouse and that a love play is being produced—this in spite of you. Hamlet was a love play in spite of Hamlet, wasn’t it? Love should be merry—oh, serious at times, yes, but merry, merry, merry! You know how the birds sing over their love-

thoughts? It should always be like that, the joyousness of golden bells, tiny ones all ringing in the green leaves early in Springtime. Merriment, merriment, merriment and joyousness, there can be no sin in a love that is merry, no more sin than there is in butterflies circling in the sunlight and lighting upon trembling flowers. To grow beautiful in each other's eyes and shine and forget everything but the illumination and cry just because it is all so dazzlingly bright, just cry and sob! Why am I saying all these things? Do you know, it seems to me that you are saying them through me. Are you? So many things crowd through my brain for expression, and all of them seem put there by you!" I closed my eyes. "This is one! Never blame the lovers of the world—they alone are sinless!" I felt Ferdinand's gaze and opened my eyes sharply. "And why did you wish to kill a man for taking advantage of a woman's mood? Why? In that yielding, my dear, lay the vibration of a wave intended for eternity's shore. But tell me about it. Was she beautiful? Did she love?"

"She was beautiful and she loved. The woman was my mother."

I leaned forward and took one of his long slender hands in mine. "Your mother!" I breathed. "And you stole out of her hands her joy!"

He left me abruptly and I went over and raised a window and let the night air blow in upon me. A cold moon was shining, and only a yard from it a blazing star.

But for these two lights the heavens were laden. I felt that I was the moon, and Ferdinand the bright star that never would approach any nearer.

I turned shivering to my room, which somehow seemed to have lost its soul. I built up a fire on the smoldering coals, and when it was blazing put on a warm woolen wrapper and sat down on the floor before it. Soon everything began to sparkle—the silver on my bureau, the brasses before me and some jewelry on a table. But my mind was not on these things; they simply helped to stimulate my brain

as wine does. I was thinking of Ferdinand, who had suddenly become an enigma to me, and I put myself back to his age and tried to remember my own views of life. How real to me then were the principles of life! Perhaps I was expecting too much of Ferdinand, and perhaps he was resisting my effort to what he supposed might be lowering his self-imposed standard. How real to me had been self-imposed standards, the intangible things he was holding on to, but that had long since been regarded by me as delusions!

And how had these things that I had once prized so drifted from me? How was it that before my time for exit from the world, my soul, the soul in which I used to find all my ecstasy, departed from me? How was it that I was merely a body that could give itself up to all the delights of the senses, yet not be in possession of the soul that had taken me upon journeys of joy far exceeding my present pleasures? Was Ferdinand right that yielding to love's demands—demands not based upon ennobling standards—had made me thus? I asked myself these questions and dwelt long upon them until at last a yearning for that lost self lit up by a beautiful soul took keen possession of me. How infinitely sweet I had been in my youth! What confidence in humanity—what faith, and how I rejoiced in self-sacrifice! I thought of some real sacrifices I had made—little things, it is true, but real things, and they seemed so beautiful that tears again gathered in my eyes and rolled down my cheeks. I felt how long it had been since I had made a sacrifice, and a feeling of revulsion at all my self-rejoicing and self-satisfaction took hold upon me—caught at my heart till it hurt me so I put my hand over it. How had the change come about? Not, certainly, of my own volition.

I shut my eyes and sat still a long while, feeling impelled to do so that some change might be wrought in me. Finally I opened them and fixed them in the direction of Ferdinand's

door, and a feeling of peace stole through me, the peace that in my childhood days had come out of nothingness and lifted me as upon waves of down until I had scarcely been able to bear the joy of it. Could it be possible that this young Ferdinand, delicately fashioned, spiritual, and outwardly so calm, had been sent to lead me back to my former state? I flung the thought from me and sprang to my feet. Did I want to be led back? Was not my present with its sensuous inclinations a better state, less troublesome, less involving? I got up and went to my bed as one in a trance.

XXIII

WHEN I awoke this morning the sun was shining strong against the buff shade, filling the room with a warm amber light, and the very noises outside assured me that the day was well on. I can generally tell by my feelings what hour in the day it is, and so I was correct when I supposed it to be eleven o'clock, because the little clock in the sitting-room struck. What a pretty sound, and how delicious the amber light in which I felt myself bathed! The fire that had been lit had burned low, the room was warm and fragrant, and the lace curtains, fine and beautiful, descended before the windows like a warm, gentle mist.

Rested and refreshed, but withal sensuous and lazy, I stretched out my arms to Ferdinand and smiled at my pleasure in the thought. By my side, however, I discovered my mail and a short note from Ferdinand, recalling to my mind an engagement on my behalf that would keep him away the better part of the day. How punctilious about his duties! At the present moment it annoyed me. A more important duty was his being on hand.

I lay for a long while looking upon this soft, velvety youth with yellow eyes, and again came the idea to be

regenerated, born again, restored to a lost condition of spirituality. Ferdinand loved me, I felt sure of that; but since he refused me for myself, rejected my offer of love, what did he desire of me? That I become his wife. The silent words were a whisper in my brain; they filled me with embarrassment, but an embarrassment sweeter than the honey buried in the heart of a pale flower in moonlight.

Three hours have passed since I penned those last words, and I stand before them as one beside a beautiful corpse, something that is dead, a piece of wax-work retaining alone a beautiful form. My spiritual young Ferdinand! But I shall put down what happened and some day when I am again tempted of the spiritual—the spirit—it will do me good to open this book, and read over what I shall now put in it. It will give me back my joy in myself, my delight in colors and what I can see and touch. That other thing, to which I was fool-like once more stretching forth my arms, is a delusion, a fraud, a part of youth that I was endeavoring to snatch at once more.

I got up and dressed myself, deciding upon putting in the afternoon at a *matinée* in order to while the time away during Ferdinand's absence, an absence that filled me with absurd restlessness. How very absurd it seems now! I was passing through the rotunda of the hotel when an acquaintance from New York sprang forward to greet me.

"Mrs. Hastings!" he exclaimed, taking my hand in both his own. "How delighted I am to see you!" And I too was delighted. An acquaintance—almost a friend from home. We talked eagerly, excitedly, as Americans will. I abandoned the *matinée* at his request and we went into the palm-room for, as he expressed it, a good talk.

"Do you know," he said when we were seated and had dismissed the inevitable waiter, "I have seen you several times during the past few days,

but you seemed so engrossed with Kenneth Clay that I wouldn't 'butt in.' When I caught you alone, though!"

"With whom?" I asked surprised, having been only with Ferdinand.

"Why, Kenneth Clay, the writer."

"But I don't know Kenneth Clay!"

"Don't know him! Oh, come now, it may be your European secret, but you can't deny it to me. I've seen you together night and day."

"But really I don't know Kenneth Clay. I've read his books, of course, but I never saw the man!"

"Well, of course—if you say so."

"But I can't dismiss it that way. What do you mean?"

"Oh, I say now, why discuss it? We're in Europe, you know. Americans should all be blind in Europe—I mean to each other. Tell me, how long have you been over and how have you been enjoying it? Do you like London?"

"I'm growing to like it—I didn't a bit at first. You know you have to discover London; it never opens any doors to you, or arms, for that matter; you have to prowling around and find out things. But it grows bigger and grander every day. I'll tell you all about that, but first I must settle this Kenneth Clay matter. What do you mean by saying you have seen me with him?"

"Who is the young man I have seen you with?"

"Why, my secretary, Ferdinand Conway."

"Ferdinand Conway!" My companion gave a long whistle, true American style, and then broke into a laugh. "Well, don't you know they are one and the same? Wait a moment," he then said, springing to his feet and starting off.

In a few moments he returned with a magazine in his hand.

"Whose picture is this?" he asked, turning the front page.

A gasp escaped me as I took the book from him and looked into the face of Ferdinand.

"But—" I said, attempting to collect myself.

My friend took the book, closed it, and found one of my hands, in friendly fashion.

"Do you really mean to tell me," he asked, "that you did not know the young man who has been escorting you about was Kenneth Clay?"

"I certainly did not!" I emphatically replied.

"Well, he is, and I am quite sure it will be you who is to figure in the novel his publishers are already advertising that he is at work upon in Europe."

"But if that is so, it is infamous!"

"My dear lady, Kenneth Clay is a psychologist, a cold-blooded analyst. You are a most interesting subject if he has managed to get a shot at you at close range. Why, he is even cleverer than I gave him credit for. I know he writes everything in close touch with his subject. I've been reading a lot of stuff about him before I came over. With him his work is first—in fact, everything. He doesn't even live the life of the ordinary male animal. He not only sacrifices himself to it, but mercilessly anything, if it chances to serve his purpose, that comes his way. From my standpoint he isn't a man at all, but a writer, and as such you can hardly hold him responsible for his idiosyncrasies. All the same I wouldn't like to be in his shoes the next time you see him. But, I say, can't we cut this dreary place and go out somewhere?"

But I no longer had any inclination to go anywhere, nor could I fix my attention upon my friend, really pleased as I had been to see him and much as I felt I wished to say. I had but one thought—to get to my room, to be alone with my own thoughts and prepare myself to face Ferdinand with his deception. My hands were like ice and my excitement beyond my control. My friend laughed at me, teased me, in fact, and we parted with my promise to see him when, as he said, I had had it out with my secretary.

"I really thought you knew," he said in leaving; "you two seemed so absorbed in each other that I thought

it was—what shall I say?—a flirtation abroad, or something of the kind. Well, you'll let the poor fellow down easily; if he had the opportunity to be near you, you can't blame him too much; we're expected to be tolerant of the geniuses."

I hardly heard what he was saying, but it all came back to me when I found myself in my room seated on the couch facing the situation. How changed everything was in this room in the short time I had been absent from it!

A terrible realization of how happy I had been and that that happiness was at end came over me. A desolation faced me that I felt I could not stand, and for a moment I shrank before the task in hand, that of calling Ferdinand to account.

Why say anything, why disturb that which was so sweet, so thrillingly sweet?

Suddenly I laughed aloud. Another realization had come to me. I had actually been believing in the possibility of happiness, and once more the dead sea fruit lay in my hand. I seemed to see myself enclosed in a high wall in a wilderness of orchids that even the movement of a hand would destroy. That kind of dream existence had been mine. All of Ferdinand's charm and beauty rose before me, and my head swam. Over, over, it was all over! And I thought a wild thought born of the love that I knew was consuming me.

What did a man's character, after all, mean to a woman? Was it ever a man's character that held a woman? And I knew that it never was, that it was the men of character whom women betrayed!

I breathed Ferdinand's name in a whisper, I looked into his eyes, at his cold, derisive lips, until his delicate hands with their long, slender fingers filled with music seemed about my throat.

When I recovered a maid was loosening my waist at the throat and Ferdinand was standing by with a glass of water in his hand. I looked about me and then put up my hand to my face

where the water was dripping and to my hair that was wet.

"You fainted," Ferdinand said quietly. "I came in and found you unconscious."

The maid, having made the proper inquiries about my condition, retired, and I looked long and steadfastly at Ferdinand.

"Who are you?" I asked him in a half-whisper.

Ferdinand had ordered some brandy and it arrived at this moment. When the waiter had left he handed it to me.

"Drink this," he said. "You are as white as a sheet. What has happened?"

"Who are you?" I repeated.

Ferdinand bent over me, full of solicitation as though I had not entirely recovered my consciousness.

"Why do you ask me that? You know who I am."

"I know that you are a liar," I said; "a cold, calculating liar."

Ferdinand flushed, that brown-red flush that is like the deep-tinted leaf of a tea-rose.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "What are you talking about? You are ill!"

"I am not ill. What is your name?"

"Ferdinand Conway—the name I gave you when you employed me."

"And Kenneth Clay?" I sneered. Ferdinand was pale now.

"That is my *nom de plume*—the name I write under."

"And you have been deceiving me!"

I was not making any pretension of charming Ferdinand now. The water still dripped from my hair to my face, my collar had been torn open, I felt pale and shrunken, a storm-tossed thing trying to get breath.

"You are angry with me," said Ferdinand. "I can understand that."

"Why keep your identity a secret?"

"Why reveal it? You advertised for a secretary to go abroad with you. I applied for the position and you accepted me. Should I have given you a fictitious name? Why speak of my work, since it did not concern what I had undertaken for you?"

"And your own work?"

"Was done at night, in cabs—on railways—in my own time."

"And what is the subject of that work?"

Ferdinand hesitated. "Yourself," he admitted.

"And you call that honorable?"

He did not reply; he seemed to be thinking.

"You have made an artist's model of me and humiliated me!" I made a gesture of disgust. "You've been amusing yourself making a fool of me. You've dissected me and watched the very quivering of my nerves. You've led me to confess myself, my inner self, all the secrets of my heart and my life. And I suppose it's in every look of my eyes, every expression of my lips, the way my heart beats and the way my color comes or goes, the way I move, walk, eat, sleep, wake, think, feel, the secrets of my heart and my past—everything! I respected you and trusted you! You, Kenneth Clay, the analytical writer, the dissector of women's souls, to whom nothing is sacred!"

Ferdinand stood before me like one upon whom the lash is being laid, but without the quiver of an eyelid.

"You are sacred," he said impassively.

I laughed and pushed the wet hair from my forehead.

"Sacred! Do you suppose I haven't heard of you, read of you, read your books? You, the dissector, the vivisector of human things, you who would lay bare the human flesh to see a nerve quiver! What I never heard was that you played parts, assumed rôles to secure your ends, made victims of those who trusted you, were dishonorable, a trickster!"

Ferdinand came up and leaned over me. "Don't," he said; "you are angry now, you will regret calling me those things."

"I will not! It is true then! I am the subject of that advertised novel?"

"It is true."

"And you have posed to me as a young saint!"

"It is you who have posed me as such."

He took his seat beside me.

"Look at me," he said. "Turn this way; I want to make things clear to you. I was your secretary and as such I had to act my part. You are imaginative, and chose to create out of me a being for your entertainment. I saw nothing in that. To get pleasure out of one's conceptions is not harmful. And besides, it has never been my habit to give verbal expression to my thoughts—they never burst from my lips; no matter how deeply I may have felt upon the subject, I have always saved what I had to say till I got my pen in my hand. My thoughts have never seemed to belong to me, but to the world. I am talking thus to you because I want you to fully apprehend, because it is your right to apprehend my meaning and the equity of my position. My thoughts, feelings, deductions, experiences are merely to me building materials, just as are to the mason his bricks, the carpenter his timber, the potter his clay. My nature is, as you know, a sensitive one, a wax plate taking impressions. I stand aloof from my fellows, not aggressively, but because contact with the world not only hurts, but destroys the impressions I revel in. For this reason I have picked out one person at a time and exploited what I have found concealed. I have found pleasure in my brain, as you have found pleasure in your beautiful body. My whole life has been in receiving impressions and then in giving expression to them."

Ferdinand paused, and in the silence I thought I heard his heart beating.

"And now," he said finally, "I come to you. During the sensational trial of the young girl who murdered your husband much was said of you in the papers, your beauty, your self-control, your composure; you were spoken of as a remarkable woman, and when your advertisement for a secretary happened to fall under the eye of my

publishers, they suggested this trip to me for the sake of a new novel."

I shrank at this, as one coming from under the influence of an anesthetic gets a glimpse of an instrument. But Ferdinand went on quickly:

"I saw no especial harm to you in the idea and, feeling capable of filling the position to your satisfaction, I applied."

"And wrote me up!" I breathed.

"Yes, I did—the book is written, and a wonderful book it is, for I have written it under the spell of inspirations born out of the most interesting subject ever presented to an author. Grant that the situation is unique, novel, whatever you will, where is the harm? In what way have I wronged you?"

Ferdinand's voice grew sweeter as he talked, until the atmosphere about me seemed that of some quiet cathedral, he himself a holy chorister chanting in the distance of heavenly things. But all at once there came a sting in the soothing bliss. Ferdinand was after all what the rest of the world had been—a delusion. He whom I had regarded as an undeveloped youth, a saint, a creature of no importance in the world, an unknown thing for me to exploit, was a conspicuous figure who had, as it is phrased, arrived, who had exploited me instead and used me to climax his efforts toward fame. What I had built a wall about, that which was my secret, my own private delight, was a conspicuous figure in the world, the property of anyone, everyone! And I who believed myself in possession of this great prize was an incident to be explored for the world's benefit, material to be dissected, unraveled and presented to that world for its criticism and entertainment.

In a flash I recognized in the silence that enveloped us that this man had been to me all that I had expected, had dreamed of becoming through him. It was he who was to lead me back to the spiritual state of my youth, restore to me my lost self, that self that had started forth in

blind and joyous faith upon life's journey, that had been stoned and that had fallen by the wayside. I now buried this dream as I had one day buried other dreams. And then my whole being seemed dissolving into the tears that gushed to my eyes. I began to sob as I had, when a child, sobbed over my doll when all that was left was the sawdust. I turned from Ferdinand and with my elbows in my lap and my face in my hands continued that sobbing that was terrible because it was real.

Ferdinand made no attempt to quiet me, and I do not know how long we sat thus. After a while I lifted my face and looked at him dismally.

"Why do you cry so?" he asked me tenderly. "Have I ever intruded upon you, ever taken advantage of the position in which I found myself, ever given you any cause for regret? Can't you see that had I done so—had I ever tried to take advantage of my position, that you would have something to reproach me for? And God knows you tempted me! I am not trying to justify my own conduct—if it was wrong it was wrong. If you wish the publication of the book stopped it shall be stopped, and you alone shall have a copy. It shall be an offering to you in remembrance of the past six months. *My* wrong to *you*, if there be one, can be repaired—undone; but what of *yours*, what of the wrong done *me*?"

"What wrong?" I breathed.

Ferdinand laughed. "What wrong! What of steadily day in and day out for six months trying to break down my efforts at self-control and bring me a cowering suppliant to your feet? What of making yourself a temptress, a temptation such as only one with superhuman strength could resist? Was there no wrong in that?" Ferdinand leaned toward me with a burning flush in his face. "Think of what you have done toward that end—think of what you have not done! Long ago, when I found that we were in a position that might develop into

a dangerous one for us both, I told you the truth about myself, not of my work—that did not seem necessary, but that I had never loved—that no woman had ever possessed me.”

I sprang forward, taunted by Ferdinand's words, his biting reproach, and peered into his eyes.

“And why,” I asked, “was that not a temptation to me? Why could I not interpret it as your manner of charming me?”

Ferdinand hesitated. “You could if you put me on that kind of level—it never occurred to me to put myself there! I tell you now that it was not my intention—it was my cry! I wanted no passion but the one I had always bowed to—my work. Had I hearkened to any other voice, how could I at my age have accomplished what I have? I have never believed in the expressions of love as a pastime. To me such things seem the questionable cups to be contemplated, analyzed and discussed, dreamed over, if you will, but not to be partaken of. I have believed that the delights of love are surpassed through repression of its demands. That has been my creed, that is why I have been able to analyze and treat of it—it has never dominated me! I am not dealing in theories now; I am telling you facts. I have been a student. As a physician keeps a record of physical diseases, I have kept a record of physical loves. They begin in a burst of glory and, especially for the woman, collapse in misery. The seers of the world—the prophets, the makers of religion, the angel-women, are those who have passed by these questionable cups—I call them questionable because I know that while there are those who claim this inspiration, my records don't show it. Worldly love is the great monster tyrant, that approaches one with fairy tread, in gossamer garments, and being embraced becomes a giant of granite, with arms of steel that crush out all joy and destroy one's usefulness in the world.”

“You are afraid of love,” I murmured.

“I am afraid of nothing! God, the world, the flesh, the devil or death!

But I have a right to my theories and I have indulged these rights. Do you know the first fear that ever crossed my brain? You!”

Ferdinand's word was like a pistol-shot, and the gasp that escaped me was audible, but I attempted a laugh. “And why, pray?” I asked.

“Because I recognized in you the incarnation of the feminine spirit that when left in idleness and amid the flesh-pots invariably works mischief. I saw this Garden of Eden in which you were placed and I saw the end—I saw this moment. And yet—” Ferdinand paused, “why should I blame you? Wilful enchantress, temptress though you be, perhaps that was God's original purpose when woman was created. You are, after all, but a descendant of Eve who did not scruple to sacrifice the whole human race for a temptation. And yet she was declared to be the perfect woman, born without sin!”

He rose and stood before me straight as an arrow, pale as early morning light. He was like an antelope on a high rock separated by a chasm from the hunter. For a moment I dared not breathe or speak for fear he would vanish from my presence.

“You think,” I asked him in almost a whisper, “that what you have accused me of was deliberate?”

“Intuitive *and* deliberate. You were perfectly conscious of what you were doing, but I repeat I do not say you were to blame. Environment is such a powerful factor, that one cannot say where its influence begins and ends—what the person voluntarily does or what the environment makes the person do. Perhaps if there had been no fruits and flowers in the Garden of Eden, only bare rocks and sand, Eve would not have succumbed and the devil would not have attracted her.”

“And you mean to say that during all this time, all these months, that you have recognized in yourself only a part of my environment?”

“I do.”

I rose slowly and stood before Ferdinand. The light that flashed from his eyes was fierce and steel-like.

"And now?" I breathed.

"Do you wish me to drink from the cups?" he asked cynically.

I stared at him, shocked. "Why do you put all the responsibility on me?" I flashed.

"Because you took the responsibility—it is yours!"

His scintillating beauty overcame me.

"Ferdinand," I whispered, "should I answer yes, and you should be, through me, made drunk—blinded, may it not be for your eyes to be opened anew that you may see greater things? Is man's life conceivable without woman? Be she all you say, temptress, enchantress, destroyer, has she not and must she not ever be his inspiration?"

"His inspiration and his destruction!" Ferdinand answered coolly. "Eve was Adam's inspiration, but through her he was driven naked and ashamed from the Garden of Eden; Cleopatra was Antony's inspiration, but she destroyed his usefulness in the world; Faustina was the inspiration of Marcus Aurelius, and changed him from a brilliant warrior to a patient philosopher that the world pities. Women are men's inspiration, but that inspiration is to magnify herself and make of the man a mere *cavallero servante*! Do you bid me drink? Have you the courage?"

I made no answer, but taking Ferdinand by the hand and leading him to the couch, seated him beside me. Outside the sun had begun to set in a splendid vermilion glow.

We fixed our eyes upon it and all seemed quite natural, just as it had been many times before, but a strange quietness was in the atmosphere, a weird helplessness, as though something were slipping from me.

"Have you?" he repeated sharply.

His voice was strangely intense in the quietude, and the sky, as though something were also slipping away, became of a sudden almost an ashen gray.

I made no answer; my eyes had not turned inward from the sky. It seemed for a moment that I was not myself. And all the while it was so still, so tender.

Presently I turned to him. The fierce look had died out of his eyes and his face wore its usual youthful, sensitive expression.

"When we stand outside the gates of paradise we will know better how to ask and answer each other's questions," I said quietly and with sarcasm. "Leave me a while now."

I put out my hand. He took it, held it for a moment, gazed curiously at me and left me.

And I lay back and marveled at man's strength and man's cruelty, while not only something that was vague, but the whole world seemed slipping from me. How blind I had been! This Ferdinand regarded by me as an expression of the spiritual, was a man with a will and with nerves of steel, a being of brain, possibly without heart, a pitiless creature whose charm lay in his being delicately fashioned to fascinate women—yet never to succumb to them. Not only had he used me, but he had made a fool of me as well. The devil took the form of a glittering serpent when he extended to Eve the apple. There seemed to be something of the serpent in Ferdinand's lithe, supple form. And then there flashed up again that terrible thought that it was not the character of a man that held woman, but his charm. Were the Angel Gabriel to descend upon me and bring me word straight from heaven that Ferdinand was Satan returned on some new mission, what effect would it have on me?

I do not know how long I remained thus in idle, passionate musings, but finally there was a knock at the door. Without moving my position I called out listlessly, "Come in."

"Pardon me," said my friend from America, entering. "I am sailing to-morrow, and as you told me you had a sitting-room I took the liberty to come up unannounced to say good-bye, and also—won't you go to the theatre tonight?"

"The theatre?" I looked at him, dazed.

"Yes, do go! I saw Clay downstairs writing and he said he didn't

expect to leave the desk till twelve o'clock."

"Writing? He said that!"

"Yes, and he didn't relish my interruption. Will you go?"

I felt a wan smile cross my lips. I seemed to be descending from some phantom ship to the shores of the world.

"Yes," I answered, "I will go. I shall be pleased to go."

I am now alone and Ferdinand is downstairs writing and he will be writing until midnight.

A ghost of a smile crossed my lips that hurt them like pain, and I seem to hear a strange, far-off voice whispering to me. Man is never what woman believes him to be. Were he, the world had long ceased to exist—the race would have died out—become extinct. It is her brain picture of him that she loves and that brings about her submission to him. She is always in love with what she, not nature, has created, and when this delicately constructed feminine fabric vanishes, as it must when daily confronted by the harshness of the real thing, she must be awakened and her joy must vanish.

The room had grown quite dark, the fire had almost burned itself out. I rose, stretched forth my arms, and walked vaguely across to the window and looked at my little park where Ferdinand's music seemed buried, and where around the curve the hansoms stood as usual, as always, with their lamps lit.

How monotonous it suddenly all appeared, with a dark, bilious-tinted fog rising, it seemed, out of the sweat of the earth.

Hundreds of thoughts passed through my mind in a few seconds—my childhood, my youth, the weary years of my married life. And then a thought that was like a bright light came. I had never wilfully wronged anyone. Whatever I had done, while I may have been conscious of it, was unconscious. I could not explain this, but I felt that nevertheless it was true. I began to see myself as an unjustly imprisoned martyr who had expected liber-

ation and who had been condemned to another term on a new charge. And was this charge just? I paused at this thought and my eyes wandered toward my desk, half-alarmed. Would I dare show Ferdinand and the little locked book lying there in which all my thoughts concerning him and myself toward him had been put down from day to day? Instantly I knew that I would not dare. So then this new sentence was just. But was it? Should a beautiful woman be condemned for her acts any more than a beautiful serpent for its sting? Was either the woman or the serpent responsible? Was it not, after all, unjust? Why give the glittering serpent a sting, and let that sting be its death?

These thoughts all wearied and perplexed me until at last I knew only that I was tired of myself, tired of my paradise of voluptuous ease. I thought of Ferdinand's mountain-top that he wished to climb, and I wondered if there were lonely pines upon it. Suddenly I felt myself climbing that mountain, reaching those lonely pines, tired still, but elated and breathing hard. All at once it seemed ages since I had breathed, and I threw back my head and drew in the warm, perfume-laden air.

"Tomorrow," I cried aloud, "a ship sails! I shall take it! I want to feel upon me the air of the open, to see again the clear light of heaven, the limpid blue of the waves, feel the salt air blowing against my face and taste the fresh brine on my lips!"

I know not how long I stood there, but suddenly the room was filled with light and I turned and faced Ferdinand beneath the blazing chandelier. A gasp escaped me. How beautiful he looked! His graceful form was erect, his eyes gold and shining, but upon his lips was a cold, satirical smile.

"I've been trying to write," he said, "but I could not. I thought I would come and play for you."

I felt a tremor pass over me which I controlled.

"No," I replied, "I go to the theatre tonight, and must dress."

"The theatre?" Ferdinand laughed.

"Yes," I said dreamily, "and tomorrow a ship sails. We will take it—will you go and arrange things?"

Ferdinand's eyes flashed and he came toward me.

"Eve then forsakes paradise?" he breathed.

"I have told you," I answered feebly, "that when we stand outside the gates we shall know better how

to ask and answer each other's questions."

Again, with his shining eyes fixed in mine, I thought of Satan, and distinctly behind him I saw an apple-tree filled with blood-red apples.

I put up my hands to shut out the vision.

"But tonight," Ferdinand said, taking them down in a sharp grasp, "I play and you listen!"



TO A HURDY-GURDY

(PLAYING ON SIXTH AVENUE)

By Charles Hanson Towne

HERE'S to you, brave Hurdy-gurdy,
Grinding out your happy tune,
While the traffic round you rumbles
In the city's Summer noon.

No one hears you! Yet the rapture
That you feel, despite our faults,
As you gaily give the measure
Of the latest merry waltz!

Trams are rolling all about you—
How the Elevated roars!
And above their noise and tumult
Your thin twanging vainly soars.

Good for you, poor Hurdy-gurdy!
Play, unheard, your little part;
Would that I could sing as you do,
With but half as brave a heart!



LOVE is a game in which the only losers are those who win.

HER LETTERS

By Elizabeth Jordan

TOINETTE, Miss Eddington's maid, tapped perfunctorily at the door of her mistress's bedroom, and, after a slight and equally perfunctory pause, opened it and went in. As she did so, the old Colonial clock in the library across the hall struck, as if registering her arrival, as it had done nearly every morning for three years at the same hour, eight o'clock. She crossed the dim room with a quick glance at the figure in the bed, closed the windows she had hygienically left open the night before, and, raising the shades, drew back the curtains, letting in a rush of sunshine. Her mistress moved, turned, and blinked protestingly in the sudden brightness. For a moment she lay still in slowly dawning consciousness after her few hours of slumber; then she opened her eyes with mute protest upon the burden of another day.

Toinette stood silently observing this return to consciousness, as for months she had watched with comprehension and sympathy the same morning tragedy—the slow, unwilling opening of her mistress's eyes, which she knew had not closed until dawn, and the quick, decisive settling upon her of some anguish-filled memory, like the spring of a crouching animal that had spent the few hours of respite in dogged waiting for its prey. The maid knew also what it was—the persistent thing the other woman fought. She thought she knew, too, the issue of the combat, and her loyal heart ached at the knowledge.

This morning Ruth Eddington threw one arm weakly over her eyes and turned her face to the wall with a little

groan. Another day to be lived through, she realized — another interminable day, during which heart and conscience must wage their endless duel. And while it went on, she, spectator, judge and victim, all in one, of this struggle for her own undoing, would face the unfaceable loneliness of life as she must live it, as against the richness of that other offered life for which her heart longed. For through it all would be the memory of eyes, of words, of looks, of a touch, of a kiss . . .

A wave of emotion rolled over her, submerging her in a pain-pierced rapture. The enemy she was fighting was already upon her, and her day was not five minutes old. It had been like this for months—it would be like this for years, she told herself again. She, to whom such love had come, was not the kind ever to forget it or to live it down. It must go on, and on, growing as it had grown during these past weeks, dominating every other interest, smiling at her from every book she read, meeting her in every picture she looked at—all-pervading, obsessing and hopeless. Her soul stood firm, but her heart—ah, there was the enemy, fighting against her in her own stronghold. There had come moments of supreme temptation, when the heart's imperious demand for life, for love, went on unceasingly while the soul seemingly stood by, alert, watchful, but silent. She wondered now, as she had wondered a hundred times, how long such a battle could endure before one found the peace of victory—or, even if one ever found victory, would peace attend it? Must one go on like this, month after month, year after year? She had heard of

broken hearts, of wrecked lives, but she had not believed in them. Now, for the first time, they meant more to her than pitiful abstractions. She set her teeth as she entered her dressing-room to take her morning bath, which Toinette had prepared. That the strain would last long—that she knew. The question for her now was, how long could *she* struggle, how much more could *she* endure? The thought of suicide had clouded her consciousness of late, but had been sternly routed. That it could have come at all was a horror. She had the pride of a fine old race, and the courage of a strong soul. However this thing ended, she told herself with a lift of the head, it should not end that way. *However it ended!* Could there be other than the one way? She caught her breath as she heard again the words that seemed always in her ears, swift, seductive words, broken, pleading, uttered in the voice that swept the gamut of love and passion. "*Let us live, my beloved; let us live,*" it had said. "*Let us go away.*"

Her thoughts turned abruptly to a Scotch town she knew far up in the Highlands, off the line of travel, among the heather and the gorse. One could be almost at the ends of the earth there, so far as discovery went. One would be very safe—Then in a soul-scorching moment Ruth Eddington learned for the first time the meaning of fear, for it gripped her suddenly. She had suffered, but through it all, until today, she at least had not dallied with the thought of compromise. She had felt sure of herself. Now she was losing hold—she was slipping—she had been dwelling on hypothetical outcomes—Had she been *planning*?

She reëntered her bedroom and composed herself again in bed, wearily awaiting the usual routine of the hour. Toinette brought her breakfast tray to her and placed it before her with her characteristically quick, deft touches of service. A pile of letters lay upon the tray and Ruth glanced at them blankly, recognizing subconsciously the presence of certain cards, bills, invitations and notes. She ran through

the collection, her thoughts far away. Four thick letters were addressed in the writing of four of her closest friends. She held these in her hand for a moment, the impulse strong in her to lay them aside with the others and go on thinking the interminable, misery-breeding thoughts which led nowhere, and which, nevertheless, she had not the strength nor the wish to banish. Suddenly she observed a deep black border on one of the envelopes. In an instant her pre-occupation fell from her. With a quick throb of apprehension she opened it and read:

VICKSBURG, June 1, 1908.

DEAREST RUTH:

Elsie died Tuesday and was buried yesterday. I wrote that sentence an hour ago. Since then I have been sitting staring at it and wondering whether it is true—whether anything so awful, so unbelievable, *can* be true! I've told myself that it isn't; that it is a frightful dream and that I must wake up soon or I shall go mad. Yet, somehow, though I feel so light-headed and queer, I know it *is* true—that it really happened, this thing that *couldn't* happen, and—Ruth, what shall I do? For God's sake come to me and hold me up until I've pulled myself together. I must live on, I suppose—but I can't, Ruthie, I can't! I want to shriek, to yell. I want to go to the cemetery and dash my head against the door of the vault that holds her. I can't breathe in a world that does not contain Elsie. I can't go on without her. She was all I had left. When Dick died I bore up for her sake, but now—I have nothing.

What does one do when one faces more than one can bear? What have other mothers done? Something tells me I must have a duty somewhere; something tells me I must hold fast to something, whatever it is; but they are far-off voices. I've no religion, no philosophy, no strength, no hope. I'm just a frantic mother, Ruth, whose whole life lay within the arms of one little girl.

You loved her, too, and she loved you. Come and help me if you can. You are so strong, so fine. There must be a path for me somewhere. Show me the way. I brought her here to our old home and laid her beside Dick, but I shall be back in Cleveland Thursday. Telegraph me that you will be there to meet me.

CAROLINE.

Ruth Eddington read the letter through, and then, laying it down, turned her face to the wall and cried hopelessly—cried for her friend, for herself, for the little girl she had loved. But the call of the mother roused her to the swift response which in all her busy professional life had never failed her friends. Without a thought of herself, or of her plans and engagements, and, though she did not realize it then, without a thought of the one who had dominated all her thoughts for months, she seized the writing-case Toinette had left on the bed, and, grasping her pen, telegraphed her friend assurance of her love and sympathy, and of her departure for Cleveland that night. Still hopelessly and with all her mind on the writer of the letter she had just read, she turned to the three that remained. One bore a London post-mark, and the writing was that of the best man friend she had—a man she had known for fifteen years. Even in her absorption she observed something unusual in it, and as she drew out many sheets of thin foreign paper from the envelope she knew that their volume meant something more than everyday occurrences.

LONDON, May 23d, 1908.

DEAR RUTH:

Years ago, in one of our talks—the kind that only man and woman friends could ever have, and such as even they seldom have—I told you that if ever I was in trouble and needed the grip of a friend's hand, the hand I would reach for would be yours. Well, I've come. Give me your hand, good and strong. I'm

up against it, as we say at home, and I've got to tell you about it, though there's nothing you can do. I'm going blind, Ruth. Nothing can save me. I haven't a fighting chance. I put it brutally, just as it was finally put to me yesterday by the sixth specialist I saw. At first they all tried to hedge, to soften the thing, but when they discovered that I wanted the truth I got it. Blindness—total, permanent, hopeless blindness.

It has always been the "beast" in my "jungle"—the thing I was afraid was going to spring out at me and get me. When I was a little shaver I used to dream I was blind, and wake up howling. I've always been afraid of the dark—even now I can't bear pitch-blackness. I must have a dim night lamp in my room, or a gleam of light from somewhere, through a window or a transom. So you see it's going to be pretty hard on me. And I'm only thirty-seven, and I've got a constitution that will keep me on this planet till I'm ninety—if I let it.

I'm putting it straight, not softening it (can it be softened?), though I know it's hard on you. It's a wonder your friends haven't worn out that big, sympathetic heart of yours by leaning their elbows on it the way they've always done—most of them. It's been a secret satisfaction to me that I didn't have to; that I wasn't plowing up your soul like the rest. I liked to feel that with me you had a relief from that kind of thing. I don't believe you've ever laughed with anyone else as we have laughed together. We've laughed, you and I, for fifteen years. We've laughed at life, at death, at heaven and hell, at eternity. Not the laugh of scorn, but of life and content. But now—well, I'll admit that at last I've run against the door with Dante's warning on it. That's where I have entered, and humor dies as you go through.

I'm a selfish beast, for I'm making it mighty hard for you by telling you something awful that you can't lighten at all. But I can't have it reach you through others and it's all leading up

to something more I want to say. I've said nothing about the effect of this disaster on my work. I don't need to. You can fill that in yourself. You will know, better than almost anyone else, what that side of it means to me. I had just signed a contract to go to South Africa next September to open some new mines and build a little railroad or two on the side. It was going to be interesting; and also—I put this last, but it's *first*—there is a Girl.

You always said she'd come, and I knew her the minute I saw her, six months ago, here in London—knew her for my own; and my heart leaped like a young colt under the heavenly shock of it. But, thank God, I have never said anything definite to her. She'll never know now what she was to me, but of course it's the turn of the screw to go away without speaking. For I'm going away, and I think, old friend, it's going to be a long journey—the longest ever. I can't stay on this earth and face the thing that's come. I think I could face anything else. I know if it was just plain old death blundering up against me, I could look straight at him with my head up and sign the old messenger boy's receipt so anyone could tell my handwriting. But forty or fifty years of darkness and uselessness, of being a clod on the earth and a burden to my friends—I'm not big enough for that. I don't believe even you could do it, and you are the finest thing I've ever known—pure gold, hammered out on the anvil of the world, as some poet said. It comforts me to think of you. I know you will think of me with charity and understanding. Yes, above all I know you'll *understand*—you always have. And that is what we're all looking for—the one who understands us, because that's the prop of life.

I've a little time left, they tell me—a few months. So I must attend to things, "For the night cometh when no man can work." I don't know where that's from, but I think it's the Bible. When I get my affairs

straightened up I'm coming back home to Chicago and I'll see you in New York. But we won't speak about this. I can write, as you see, but I can't talk. I've said now all I can say—and a lot more than I should!

Your old pal,

JACK.

It was all there, and Ruth Eddington read it with widening eyes, the color slowly leaving her face as she turned page after page of the letter. It was inconceivable that this horror should have come to Jack—to Jack, gayest, most debonair, most unconquerably light-hearted of human beings. Yes, they *had* laughed together! She wondered how they could ever have done so—how anyone could laugh in a world which held such suffering for human beings. She felt sick and dizzy in the surge of her sympathy for him. For a long time, her brain in a whirl, she felt the blackness of his fate roll over her. Then, seizing the first inspiration that came to her, she wrote a long cable message, so worded that he alone would understand it. She realized, too, how near she had come in her blind selfishness to total ignoring of the mail that held the cry of these two friends so close to her, and it was with a quickened conscience that she opened the third letter and slowly began its perusal. As she did so, she had a sudden dim sense that this agonized stretching of despairing hands to her had somehow swept away the cloud from her own soul.

CHICAGO, June 1st, 1908.

DEAREST RUTH:

I turn to you as I have always turned since we were little convent girls together. There is no one else to whom I would dare to offer today such a burden of depression and fear. Even as I do it, I remember how in the past I've criticized others for imposing so many of their troubles on you—but it's different now, I find. I understand why they did it. I understand many things better than I did, and

above all I understand something of the meaning of the ties that bind together the victims of the awful experience we call human life.

I did not begin this to philosophize, but to tell you what has come upon me. For a long time I have not been well. Yesterday morning I forced myself to go to the doctor for an examination, fearing and believing that I knew what was the matter. I chose Dr. Mary Bostwick, whom you know, because we are friends and I felt that she would tell me the truth. She did! The moment she had finished the examination I saw by her face that something was all wrong. Ordinarily, no doubt, she could have concealed her anxiety; but we are friends, as I've said, and she's fond of me. She turned her back and fussed with things for a moment while I sat waiting. Then she disappeared into an inner room. When she came out it was with the air of jaunty professional cheerfulness they all put on just before they begin to read one's death warrant. I recognized it and I spared her and myself the preliminaries.

I said, "It's malignant, then?" and when she began to explain that of course she was not certain and that we must have the decision of a specialist, I settled things in five seconds by having her telephone to Dr. Wilcox, asking him to make an appointment as soon as possible. I don't know what she said to him, but I fancy she put the case urgently, for he said he would see us immediately and we went to his office at once.

Ruth, the things we women suffer—we high-strung, imaginative women! Nothing, however bad, can be quite as awful as we picture it. I wouldn't dare to tell you what that next hour was to me. We had to wait forty minutes in Dr. Wilcox's anteroom, and of course Dr. Bostwick filled the interval with conscientious prattle which I didn't hear. I remember, though, that she devoted much conversation to Dr. Wilcox's rubber plants in particular and to the treatment of rubber plants in general. I never want to see another rubber plant! I studied the wall-

paper and the rugs. I could tell you the minutest details of the patterns, and the awful ornaments on the mantel. Once, when Dr. Bostwick didn't know I was looking at her, I saw tears in her eyes. They touched me, for she is not a sentimental person, as you know, but of course they did not relieve the tension. I sat there waiting for the surgeon to come, and undergoing that frightful sensation of being *trapped*, of being in the grasp of an awful thing one can't get away from; and I died and buried myself a dozen times; and most of all I thought of my children and of how much they still need me. You'll be good to them, Ruth, won't you? You'll be good to them all, especially to Emily, who is so high-strung and nervous and hard to understand. It seems as if I myself had only just learned to understand her, and our perfect sympathy of late has been so sweet, so beautiful . . .

Dr. Wilcox confirmed Dr. Bostwick's diagnosis, at which I am sure she felt an innocent gratification. It would have been embarrassing if she had been mistaken, though she had left herself a large loophole in the visit to him. Don't think I'm bitter; I'm only unutterably wretched and frightened—as frightened as a lost child, and as hideously lonely. For I must go through this by myself. I cannot and I will not tell the children until it is over. I won't have them suffer the preliminary agony of it—and Frank will not sail home from Europe until the twenty-sixth of this month.

The doctors want the operation at once, of course. I think Dr. Wilcox would have performed it that afternoon if I had let him! They were both impressed by my family history, and by the discovery that my father and my grandfather died of cancer. The hideous thing I have, it seems, is "the kind that brooks no delay." But I begged off until Wednesday, for I have matters to arrange. Then I came home and locked myself in my room.

I don't know how long I stood at one of my windows looking out at the blank white wall of the apartment house just

across from us and trying to find somewhere in the innermost depths of me the courage to go through this thing with dignity. For I'm horribly afraid—afraid of pain, afraid of death, afraid of what is beyond death! And, most of all, I'm afraid of the slow, horrible *drag* of it, the going by inches, the suffering and helplessness of those around me.

While I was with the doctors I did very well. I saw them exchange admiring glances, and Dr. Bostwick became quite gay as she related instances of patients who had been operated on years ago and were still alive. But when I got home and had to face it alone—where no eye was on me and no ear could hear me—oh, then, Ruth, I went through my Gethsemane. After such an hour no soul can be the same. I know now that I can meet what I must meet, and do it worthily, as my father did it (you know how magnificently he died!), and as my children's mother should do it. I can make it all as endurable as possible for them, and I can leave them a memory which will comfort them when I am gone.

If you can come to me for a little while later, come! You know how I've always leaned on you. Only one other could help me—Sister Estelle; but she is far away where I cannot reach her.

Don't think this is a permanent mood of depression, of utter despair. It will no doubt have changed when you get this letter, and I shall be again "the captain of my soul." But the longing to see you will remain. I will have them telegraph you after the operation, and in a few weeks, when I am at home again, you will come, won't you? You have never failed me yet!

Your devoted

ALICE.

Ruth read and re-read the letter slowly, agonizingly, with a sense that the universe was tottering about her—that such things were too grotesquely horrible to be true. In these black moments, under such hideously re-

current blows of fate, there seemed nothing that human love and sympathy could do. She, too, like her friends, felt trapped, tied to the wheel and helpless. She looked across her room wildly, with the sense that she was given more than she could bear, and with the conviction that she could herself endure these ills more easily than she could face the agony of looking on while her friends suffered. Then, feverishly, she picked up the fourth letter, for she saw the Hawaiian post-stamp, and the flowing writing of a hand she loved—the hand of a nun who was working among the lepers of Molokai. Here lay the most inspiring influence of her life—an influence that had never lost its uplift nor its force. Almost hysterically she opened the letter now, filled with a childlike longing for the comfort and help a message from Sister Estelle always brought her. It did not fail her today. She read:

KALAUPAPA, MOLOKAI,
May 15th, 1908.

MY DEAR CHILD:

I am writing sooner than I thought I could, and than I should had not your last letter seriously disturbed me. You tell me you are in trouble; that you are going through an emotional struggle. You do not tell me what it is. I wish you had done so—for surely there is nothing you could not tell me, repository as I am of the secrets of the grave itself! But whatever it is, of one thing I am very certain: you will conquer.

You are not made to lose such a battle. You are too well armed. Religion, dignity, self-control, pride, all these shields are yours today, as they have ever been. The student I knew long ago had them; they show in the photographs you have sent me in these later years, and they are revealed in the letters you write me—those letters which mean so much to me and to my people. I have often wondered if you realize what a link you are with life to these victims of a living death. I talk to my pupils and my patients

about you—of the work you do, of the beautiful music you hear, of the pictures you see, of the famous men and women you meet, of the wonderful places you visit. Some of them care not at all for the better part of this—but others care much; and almost without exception they have the curiosity of little children and a childish eagerness for “stories.” So I tell them the stories of the friend of my heart—the friend I am justified in loving because she is so much to my people—because she is with us here in spirit, in influence, in sympathy, as no one else has ever been, and as no one else could ever be. Then the books you send and the magazines and the pictures—and the help of every kind. Thank you again for all, dear child. I often wonder how we could go on without you.

As I have said to you before, you will suffer, for you have the capacity for sorrow, but you will be strong. I have never known anyone better fitted to cope with the perils of the selfish world you live in—the world I think of now as on another planet. Is it possible that I ever lived there? Did I ever travel and see beautiful things and hear beautiful music? I have had, since I came here, a strange impression of inhabiting with my people some burned-out star—all ashes and twilight and silence. But there is peace here, the kind that “passeth understanding,” and I am at my post, which is the one important thing in life. To do one’s duty, to try to do it worthily, to help others, that, above all, to keep the letter and spirit of our religion—there is our creed, Ruth dear; yours no less than mine. We cannot go far wrong if we hold to it. Hold fast to yours, and most of all hold fast in time of struggle and temptation. Seek the help and comfort of the Church. Go regularly to confession, to communion—those fountain-heads of strength.

I do not fear for you. But I wish you to feel that I am with you, whatever you are undergoing, and that I am holding your hand closely in mine,

as I did twenty-five years ago when you were a homesick little schoolgirl crying in the dormitory. The light will come as it did then, streaming through the convent windows, brightening the dim corners of the convent garden (Ruth, Ruth, how I sometimes long for a glimpse of that garden, for a whiff of our *mignonette*!). *The light will come.* I trust you absolutely. Do not be afraid. We are but weak human beings, but we are not taxed beyond our strength. The soul wins when the battle is well fought. Write to me soon, my child, and tell me that yours has won. And may God bless and keep you always.

SISTER M. ESTELLE.

With a quick impulse Ruth leaned forward and seized her writing-case again. In that decisive instant she felt that she could not delay a second in casting off the weight that had held her down. Here, high and clear above the sorrowful cry of her friends, which alone had stirred all that was best and most unselfish in her, came the trumpet call to which her soul had always responded—the community call, the call to duty and action. She knew her struggle was over. Temptation fell from her like a garment that slips down. The fever in her veins had left her, quenched by the tears of those she loved. An unspoken prayer rose in her heart that she might be worthy of the confidence of the friends who had turned to her in their agony—that she might be given the strength to help them. She knew now how much they had helped her! In her need and their own, their hands had been stretched out to her from the four corners of the earth, and in stretching had met and formed a circle around her which no enemy could break through. Her little, petty problems, her insignificant troubles, what were they in the face of these disasters to those she had loved all her life? An overwhelming shame scorched her soul as she realized how she had been tempted, that she had hesitated, that she had almost proved

false to every standard she had borne so proudly—almost, but not wholly. Temptation is not sin, not degradation, though she now saw the force with which it had swayed her as truly that.

She drew a long, full, vitalizing breath—that of the woman restored to herself. She knew as absolutely as she had ever known anything in her life that the fight was over. This did not mean that suffering was at an end. But the operation had taken place, and she would recover.

She adjusted the case firmly upon her knees and, taking up her pen, wrote a brief note:

When you receive this I shall have left New York for an indefinite absence. I shall never see you again. I ask you to make no attempt to see me or communicate with me in any way. The last courtesy you can show me is to accept my decision as unalterable.

RUTH EDDINGTON.

She put the letter into an envelope, which she addressed, stamped and sealed. Then she gathered up the

telegram and cable she had written and rang for Toinette. When the maid appeared she was hurriedly beginning to dress.

"Toinette," she said, "we will start for Cleveland this afternoon at five o'clock. Mrs. Warburton is in trouble, and I am going to her and afterwards to Chicago. We may be gone for months, so pack accordingly. See that the trunks are sent to the Grand Central Station in time, and that a cab is here for us at half-after four. Send off the telegram and the cable and post this letter—no, I'll post that myself when I go out."

She turned away as she spoke, and so missed the sudden radiance of Toinette's face, and the quick throwing back of her shoulders as if she, too, had cast off a burden. Then the training of years asserted itself and the servant resumed her habitual mask.

"Yes, Miss Eddington," she murmured obediently; but her quiet voice held a note of exultation.



DEARTH

By Florence Earle Coates

AS one who thirsting waits, while mocking him
 The waves o'erleap his shattered vessel's brink;
 And, drifting on, life's cup but once to brim,
 Fain to sheer depths would sink—
 So everywhere beholding love neglected,
 Carelessly set aside, despised, rejected,
 I faint for a pure draught not mine to drink.

As one who faring o'er a desert plane
 Sees fountains clear in the mirage arise,
 And, parchèd, longs the nectar sweet to gain
 Which still before him flies—
 So, wistfully, half doubting, half believing,
 Scornful of hope—yet hopeful, self-deceiving,
 I thirst for love, which wastes before my eyes.

DINNER FOR SIX

By Lilian Bell

THEY came in with an air of expectancy which showed that some of them at least were unused to dining in a public restaurant, and it presently transpired that the girl in white had never ordered a dinner and this was to be her chance.

Our table was next theirs and while Himself studied the menu I had time to observe our neighbors.

There were six of them. One Girl in White, one Girl in Blue and a Woman in Pink. One Silly Ass, one Gibson Man and one Family Man, whose wife was out of town, and who evidently was invited at the last moment to fill up.

It was a party incongruous enough to be interesting from the start, and before they had been seated ten minutes I remarked to Himself that I was going to have the time of my life.

The Silly Ass at first gave no reason for his existence. I could not find an excuse for his living at all. The Gibson Man exhibited a patience born of long experience with women, while the Family Man bullied the waiter, just to show that he was master of the situation, from which I deduced the fact that he was hen-pecked at home. No one stoops to bully a servant who is not trying to get even for some sort of domestic tyranny which he is unable to remedy.

The Gibson Man was evidently host, and the Woman in Pink the Chaperon. For this reason, and apparently no other, the Family Man exclaimed loudly:

"Let's have a round of cocktails first!"

Himself looked at me and murmured:

"His wife evidently doesn't allow him to drink!"

I motioned him to silence and boldly went on observing.

The Gibson Man looked uncomfortable.

"I have never had a cocktail in my life!" cried the Girl in White.

"Oh, then you must have one!" exclaimed the Girl in Blue. "It makes you feel so nice and wobbly in the elbow-joints!"

"Well, neither one of you girls is going to feel nice and wobbly in the elbow-joints while I am above ground!" said the Woman in Pink, decidedly. Whereat the Gibson Man drew a sigh of relief and turned to the menu card.

"What shall we have?" he said to the Girl in White. "As this is your first experience, suppose you order the dinner?"

He was evidently not looking for trouble. He seemed simply to want to give her pleasure.

Himself looked at me and grinned. Then he wrote five items silently and swiftly on a little pad and handed it to our waiter, whose face lighted as he read its concise orders, and with a muttered, "*Bien, monsieur!*" he disappeared.

"Oh, I should simply love to," squealed the Girl in White. Then turning to the Girl in Blue, she said: "Now, what do you like? I am going to order to suit everybody!"

"I am afraid you will find that rather difficult," said the Chaperon, who seemed hungry. Then turning

to the Gibson Man, she said: "Just because I won't let the girls have cocktails, there is no reason why you three men shouldn't have them!"

"Good work," said the Silly Ass. "A dry Martini for me, old chap!"

The Gibson Man whispered to the Woman in Pink, but she shook her head and motioned toward the girls.

The Family Man decided on a Manhattan cocktail, and the Gibson Man wrote these down with an order for Scotch and soda for himself and let the waiter go.

"Now," said the Girl in White, "how would it do to begin on oysters?"

"I hate oysters. Make it Little Neck clams for me," said the Girl in Blue.

"I wish I could have some caviar," sighed the Woman in Pink. "Don't you wish we could get some fresh caviar like that we had in St. Petersburg?"

The Gibson Man smiled.

"Don't I, though! But as we can't—"

"How many want oysters?" cried the Girl in White. "Hold up your hands! Three for oysters and three for clams! Now that's all right. Will you write it down?" she begged of the Gibson Man. "You write and we'll suggest."

"Now a soup! Cream or boullion?"

"I like thick soups best, but they do take away your appetite!" said the Woman in Pink. "How about a chicken broth in cups?"

"Or a petite marmite?" said the Silly Ass.

"Or a green turtle?" said the Family Man.

"I believe I'll change my order of clams to oysters!" cried the Girl in White, suddenly. The Gibson Man gravely made the change.

"Now about soups?" he said tentatively.

The waiter reappeared with the cocktails, and the Family Man proposed the health of the ladies.

"To you!" murmured the Silly Ass to the Woman in Pink. She looked at the Gibson Man and they both smiled.

"About the soups!" suggested the Family Man.

"Would green turtle suit everybody?" asked the Woman in Pink. It made her a little nervous to see that we had finished our oysters and were eating our soup.

After a little more discussion they decided on three for green turtle and three for chicken broth in cups.

"Now fish!" cried the Girl in Blue. "Is anybody going to deny me a broiled lobster!"

"A broiled lobster as a fish course!" cried the Woman in Pink. "My dear, think a moment!"

"I do think! I am thinking, I never do anything *but* think what I want to eat in a restaurant, and I never can get anybody to join me in a lobster! Sometimes they won't even let me *order* one!"

"Well, you are going to have one right now," said the Gibson Man earnestly. "And I'll join you just to show that I approve your taste!"

The girl's face brightened, and the Woman in Pink looked appreciatively at the Gibson Man.

"I think that was lovely of him!" I murmured to Himself, but Himself only grinned as he handed me the sauce tartare.

"How would broiled Spanish mackerel do?" suggested the Family Man.

"I adore planked shad—all but the bones," said the Woman in Pink, "but I'll go in for mackerel if the girls want it."

After ten minutes of spirited discussion it was finally decided to order bluefish.

The waiter stood on the other foot.

"Any wine, sir?" he suggested deferentially. "I might be ordering it, sir!"

"May they have champagne?" asked the Gibson Man in a low tone. As the Woman in Pink hesitated, he murmured: "Why deny yourself everything, just because you are the *chaperon*?"

At this she weakened and he wrote down a champagne. The waiter took on a new lease of life as he trotted away to fill the order.

"What do girls like for meat?" asked the Family Man, an eagerness for food beginning to glitter in his eye. Himself glanced at him sympathetically as our waiter deftly slipped a portion of peas to keep company with the broiled chicken on our plates.

"Oh, are rice birds in season?" exclaimed the Girl in Blue.

"Rice birds!" exclaimed the Family Man involuntarily.

"I am afraid they are not in season," said the Gibson Man evenly. "How would quail do, or snipe?"

"Could I have roast beef?" demanded the Family Man.

"We might all have it after the birds," suggested the Woman in Pink.

That remark alone showed that she was married. Such tact in catering to a man's appetite does not go, as a rule, with the spinster's estate.

"Quail then," decided the Girl in White, "and instead of roast beef for me, chicken in those queer things—you know—all stewed up with an odd-tasting sauce and cooked in a queer sort of bowl—what do you call 'em?"

"Chicken en casserole," translated the chaperon.

The Gibson Man wrote patiently and the waiter suggested serving the champagne.

The Gibson Man looked up inquiringly, and moved by the thirsty appeal in the eyes of the two men, the Woman in Pink said:

"Yes, do let him!" and then bit her lip to keep from laughing. "But first send him along with as much of the order as has been decided on. For heaven's sake!" she added in a murmur.

The waiter was accordingly despatched. The lines of anguish smoothed a trifle from his brow, and he started on a trot.

The Girl in White had been studying her menu. Suddenly she put out her hand.

"Oh, wait! Has he gone? Call him back! I want to change my

order. I see something here that I would like much better than quail. I—"

The Chaperon reared her crest.

"It is too late now, dear!" she said evenly. "Keep that for another time. I'll bring you here some day for luncheon and then we'll come early and take simply hours to decide!"

"Oh, you love!" cried the Girl in White, reaching out and pressing her hand ecstatically.

The waiter came hurrying back with the oysters and clams. He was plainly nervous. It was already half-past eight and we were having our salad.

"Take these clams away!" cried the Family Man rudely. "I said oysters! Can't you remember a little thing like that? You've had time enough to learn the order by heart!"

"I beg pardon, sir!" said the unfortunate menial humbly.

The Family Man fairly gobbled his oysters.

"How disgusting of him!" I murmured to Himself.

"Not in the least," he answered me. "The fellow may be uncouth, but he has my sympathy. He had his cocktail fifty minutes ago and they have been talking food ever since. At present, I am racked with anxiety to know whether they will decide on hot or cold artichokes, or whether it will be asparagus. Listen!"

We listened. We couldn't help it. This was better than a one-act play and we didn't care if we missed the curtain-raiser.

"Would you like cheese with your salad or after the sweets?" asked the Gibson Man, and his tone was as courteous as it was when they began to order—just one hour before.

"I'd like it after," said the Girl in Blue.

"And you?" he asked the men.

"With!" snapped the Family Man. "May that fool bring the soup?"

At a sign the waiter sprang forward. The girls were still toying with their clams.

"Oh, wait a minute! Don't hurry

us!" cried the Girl in White. "Aren't these clams perfect darlings!"

"I wish I were a clam!" sighed the Silly Ass.

"So do I!" growled the Family Man. "I'd eat one your size with pleasure!"

"Oh, I hope you aren't as hungry as all that!" said the Girl in White.

"Have I been slow in ordering? You see I have had no experience and it has been such fun!"

"You have not been too slow!" lied the Gibson Man nobly. "Just tell me what sort of an ice you like, and then we are practically through with this part."

"Oh, anything very sweet and rich and done up in cute little paper boxes!" cried the Girl in Blue.

For the first time the Gibson Man looked helpless. He shot a glance of appeal at the waiter, who bent over and murmured in his ear.

"Nesselrode pudding might please her taste, sir!"

"Hold your tongue!" said the Family Man. "Don't suggest a thing until your help is asked. The officiousness of some of these waiters is insufferable!"

"I wished him to translate," said the Gibson Man coldly. The Woman in Pink sent the Family Man as settling a glance as if she had been his wife. Evidently he understood the quality of it, for he shrank visibly.

Himself carefully took the sugar from his coffee-cup before the waiter could pour his coffee.

"That woman is masterly in her management of men," he observed to me. "I like her generalship."

"Oh, couldn't I have a chestnut plombière instead of a Nesselrode

pudding?" asked the Girl in White. "My sister had one here once and she said it was the best thing she ever tasted. She told me to be sure to try one the very first chance I got. May I?"

"Most certainly. And now that, with coffee, will do!"

The Gibson Man handed the waiter the pad and leaned back in his chair. He managed to look at his watch. It was ten minutes to nine and our waiter was bringing Himself the bill.

The Woman in Pink touched the Gibson Man's arm with her fan.

"I think it was very nice of you," she said. "It is so difficult to please everybody, but you seem to have achieved it."

His face lighted under her words.

"Thank you," he said, "I hope I have succeeded."

We rose to go, and the last thing we heard as we passed out was the voice of the Girl in White, saying:

"Oh, do call the waiter back! I've seen something here—I'd so much rather have than—"

Himself caught my hand and pulled me away.

"Why didn't you wait to let me hear what it was?" I asked reproachfully.

"Because I didn't care to lose my mind," he said cheerfully. "Another moment of their society and I should have been en route for a padded cell!"

All during the play I kept wondering what it was that girl wanted to change.

It haunts me yet, so that I can't sleep o' nights for thinking of it.



MATRIMONIAL AMENITIES

MRS. HENPECK—Before our marriage you told me you were well off.
MR. HENPECK—So I was—only I didn't know it!

THE WORD AND THE WISE

By Beatrix Demarest Lloyd

"**M**ONSEIGNEUR is dining alone," said the servant. The light from the lamp in its six-foot silver stalk glistened on his gold cordons and shone warmly in the red velvet of his costume. "His orders are strict—that he will see no one. But monsieur is, I know, an old friend"—he might better have said a young one—"and I will ask."

Errolby, left alone in the hall, stood waiting, hat in hand, as the man walked away from him down the long corridor. How impossible it seemed to believe that he was really in the city of Manhattan. The very accent of the French servitor, the exaggeration of the isolation of his master, a dignitary of the Church, the whole atmosphere of the house, was foreign to every impulse of the American life.

He stood looking at the silver lampstick dully until the servant returned. "Monseigneur," said the man with an inflection that demanded a recognition, "asks that monsieur will do him the honor to pass into the dining-room."

Errolby handed him his hat and stick and obeyed orders. After walking the length of the long hallway, hung with tapestries, the subjects of which were far from orthodox, as is the habit of art, he entered a luxurious room of medium size with whose homage the god of the stomach, whoever he may be, should have been duly satisfied.

There was a table in the middle of the room on which the attention of Errolby was fixed. It was more particularly concentrated on the man then seated at it, but it had time to ob-

serve again—for these were no new scenes to him—the rich shadowed walls, the darkened windows, the soft effulgence of silver, the cleanness of white napery, the glow of crystal and the fragrance of wine and excellent cookery.

Monseigneur was enveloped in his silken gown; his fingers, white as a child's, encircled his glass; he was leaning back in the wholesome content of inner man, and his coffee smoked before him. He looked up with a slow smile as Errolby entered.

"It is long since I have seen you," he said.

Errolby smiled, too, in answer. "If I were a Catholic, I would see you oftener, doubtless," he answered.

"Doubtless," replied his host suavely. "Sit you down. Take this chair. And I have a glass all ready for you and for your wine."

Errolby took the chair while monseigneur with his own hand poured the wine. "And what brings you to me at the end?" he said pleasantly.

The visitor drew the filled glass toward him and turned it about as a connoisseur might inspect a yellow diamond. "You know, then, that something has brought me?" he asked without looking up.

"Only that something always has," said the other, in the peaceful amplitude of his well-being.

"Yes," said Errolby, "yes, of course."

A silence hung about them for a moment. The clear, shrewd Jesuit eyes of the arch-priest observed him for an instant and then fell to a contemplation of his demi-tasse. The guest twisted his glass a little longer, felt in

his pockets, produced a cigarette-case and asked for permission to smoke. Monseigneur waved away the implicated denial with a courtly hand.

"Well, yes, of course," said Errolby. "I may not be a Churchman, but we are friends."

"We are friends," assented monseigneur as the visitor lighted his cigarette.

"Then it is on the basis of a friend that I come," said Errolby, puffing.

The ecclesiastic bent forward and stirred his coffee. Then he laughed softly. "Ah, my son, my son," he said, with a wistful tenderness, "how sharply you draw the line. You know in your own heart that my acknowledged belief and my station are much to you, yet you will not openly admit it. You know how drawn you are, as all men should be, toward the Church, and you will not admit that. But the friend—that most precarious and uncertain of all footings—you dare that gallantly. As a friend, then, yes!"

"I have come," said Errolby, without directly answering the contention of his host, "for your opinion. It may be that I would not have come for it had you not been a cardinal and my friend, even though I am no Catholic. But, for whatever undelved and unsolved reasons, here I am."

Monseigneur bent his head. "Here you are," he said kindly.

"It is a serious errand," said Errolby. "It decides my whole life."

One sharp glance from the blue eyes and the interest of the prelate was veiled. He stirred his coffee again and was silent.

"Of course," said Errolby, twisting his glass, "it is a woman."

There was a silence.

"She is bound, fettered by contradictory laws, enmeshed in this movable feast of matrimony which here is and there is not. She cannot be free. She has every reason to be free, but the evidence is not of a legal nature. I mean, there are no witnesses."

Monseigneur stirred his coffee and watched the blue smoke from the man's cigarette. In reality he was watching the man, but that is of no importance.

"I love her—deeply. I can imagine no greater pride and joy than to call her my wife. I want her, not as a selfish desire, but as the mother of my children and the spirit of my home. She—"

His voice ceased a moment and then went on: "She loves me, too, in the same way and truly. Yet she cannot free herself and he will not free her. Her life is a sordid, desperate agony, with nothing evil enough in it to redeem it from commonplace despair. We have tried everything, and everything has failed us."

He lifted his glass and looked at it. Then suddenly he put down his wine and his cigarette and faced his host. "What do you say?" he demanded. "Is she to live in a barren wilderness until she dies, because she married this man, believing him to be all the things that he is not; because she has patiently suffered every degradation a woman can know; because she has given him everything of womanhood and forbearance and fortune and consideration one human can give another, and has received nothing, nothing, nothing in return? Is hers to be the expiation of his unspeakable lowness? I love her. And I will take her with me into the world and be as true to her, as faithful, as considerate, as gentle and as loving as if we had been married at your own altar. If one of us must die, the other can die too. I tell you she has every reason, but no proof. The laws exact the latter, not the former. For the woman who has known years of happiness and yet is thrust through the heart by one infatuated infidelity, even coupled with pitiable remorse, there is freedom. But the woman who endures and endures; who knows as everyone else knows, yet cannot prove; who has tasted of humiliation, neglect, misunderstanding, incompatible companionship, misery, agony, and soul's death—there is no future. I love her and she loves me. I am come to tell you. I am at an impasse. I have brooded over the thing so long that I no longer trust myself to see clearly. It is her happiness, nothing but that.

For myself, I could see her go back to that home with all gladness if she was to be content. It is her happiness and her spirit which are starving to death under these conditions." His gray eyes burned into the blue ones of his older friend. "What do you say? What am I to do? She needs me, she wants me, in all reason she should be allowed to come to me. I ask you, what am I to do?"

Monseigneur, his old face calm with accepted platitudes, looked upon him. "You have no choice, my son," he said quietly. "These storms are sent but to test our strength. This life is nothing. Whether we suffer or are at peace is nothing. We are here to do what is right or what is wrong. The choice rests with us. We are not here to live—that is for another sphere. We are here to prove our right to live. She has married—that is an end to it. If she were to be set free by ten thousand laws of man, she cannot be set free by any law of God's."

"But she went into the contract blinded! She believed in this man!"

"She went into it. That is all that can be said," replied monseigneur. After a pause he drank his coffee.

As the younger man sat with his hands locked together on the table, the prelate regarded him. Presently he spoke again, gently. "This love of one person for another is as nothing, my son, in the eyes of the deity who created the heaven and earth. A thousand years are but as a day in His sight. It is His love and ours for Him that matter. We are all living in blindness, and He is the light. It is for us to grope our way toward it. If in the going we touch another hand, we may either relinquish it or help to guide it nearer to the light. That is all. There is no further question and no further command."

"But if she is being dragged down by another hand—"

"She is married."

"Marriage is a law made by men!"

"It is a law of the Church, and the Church is God's," said monseigneur.

Errolby got to his feet. "You are

wrong," he said in a thick voice. "I know—somehow I know that you are wrong." And he left him.

He went out into the cold night air half bewildered, yet remembering. Mechanically he took his way from the great gray house. Obedient to his subconscious will his feet led him to the home of another friend, a man of the world and its bondages. He found him with an after-dinner cigar and a cognac in his library. He was greeted with unconstrained delight and a cigar and a liqueur were offered him.

"Thank you, no," said Errolby. "I have come to talk with you."

The friend rolled another chair nearer the fire and eyed him closely. His visitor's financial standing was of a degree that put any such difficulty out of the question. Errolby dropped into the chair and sat with his hands grinding together in the old way, regarding the flames in the fire-place. The other resumed his seat, sipped of his brandy, smoked his tobacco, and, always eying his guest, waited.

Errolby stated his case again, like a man who has appealed to a higher judgment. His sincerity, his deep distress, his quiet calm, infused a force into his story that gained its sympathetic hearing. Cushing sat silently listening, his eyes fixed on the speaker as he lay at length in his chair, drawing long drafts of smoke from his cigar. The mists of blue hung between them.

"It has come to just this," said Errolby, leaning far forward in his chair and as ever regarding his interlocking fingers. "Either she is to live on in a condemnation to solitary confinement which she has not deserved, and I am to be forever alone, or else we are to step out of the circle of dancers in this quadrille of social restriction, and go our way together into a new world where we shall have to be to one another all that the world can give. It is no ephemeral or hysterical fancy. I have loved her for years, years. I have had no other thought. I have known no other being on the face of the earth. We have done all we can, according to the law, and we have failed. She does not merit the

fate that has been allotted her. Granted all the little arrows that may be shot at her, are they not better than a long, slow death by torture? She is young and life has not yet given her one year of happiness. I am young. And there is nothing for either of us between this day and our last, except one another."

Cushing waited to see if his friend had more to say, but Errolby sat silent. At last the older man sat up. Carefully he broke the ash from his cigar into the *cendrier* at his elbow. Then, with a hitch at his coat, he leaned back again.

"It can't be done, my dear fellow," said he; "you know as well as I do how many have tried it. And their histories all go into one side of the balance. It can't be done. It is like perpetual motion or immortal youth, or any of those other dreams. They may be impossible because of natural laws, and this may be so because of natural or unnatural laws. It doesn't matter why. The point is that it can't be done. You would have a life of hounded apprehensions. You would have to sit beside her and see her cut by the people who are not fit to touch the dirt she walks on. You would see tears in her eyes and wish you had died before you ever came into her life. You would find yourself dreaming that she was back in her old misery, bad as it was, where you and she could love one another without reproaches, rather than have her beside you and know you had your share in bringing a sadness, new in form but equally poignant in degree, upon her. You see, do what we will we cannot escape the laws of social convention. We may know they are wrong; we may clearly understand that they are very far from the original intention of God; we may say to ourselves that they are purely fictitious, unsupported dogma defined and enforced by finite man. But, my dear chap, there are no angels on earth to bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone— isn't that it? You might just as well enter a gambling-house and try to play your own game while everyone else at the table was playing faro. What

would happen? The dealer would quietly go on taking cards off the top of the pack and the others would go on losing money on their bets, and you would sit there playing solitaire with your own pack until the ambulance doctor took you away to the psychopathic ward. You can't play solitaire at a faro table. If you are born and bred and you live among certain laws, to transgress them is fatal, not only to yourself and to her, but to your love and your happiness. You must remember that though a just God may have designed and may rule the earth, He doesn't live here, and He is not conducting any institution for the refuge of people who understand Him. The world is full of people, people. And you have to play your game with them, not with a superior host. You are not big enough to challenge ten men at once in a hand-to-hand fight, are you? And do you consider yourself then strong enough to combat the whole world full of men? My dear Errolby, believe me, you are not the first, nor the million-and-first, who has been in this situation. The experience of those others is its own lesson. It can't be done. It never has been done. And that is the experience of centuries. It is not to be denied." He took another and last breath from his cigar and his words came forth with the smoke of it. "It can't be done!"

Errolby sat silently. He had not moved, his eyes had not been lifted from his twisted fingers all during his friend's reply. Then he rose suddenly.

"I thank you," he said slowly. "I thank you. Good night."

Cushing got to his feet, dropping his burned-out stump of a cigar. "Don't go like that, old man," he said kindly. "Sit down again and let us talk the thing out. Do let me give you a cognac. Stay here and rest your bones and your soul. I can put you up for the night—it would be a rare pleasure."

Errolby held out his hand. "I really must be going," he said; "I have a visit to make, and the hour is growing old. I am not going 'like that.' I came to ask your opinion and you have given

me that, most courteously and kindly. I said I thank you, and I do. Good night."

Still protesting, Cushing followed him to the door. But Errolby took up his gloves and stick and hat from the table in the hall, and with another grip of the hand and another friendly rejection of the offer of further hospitality, went away. Cushing closed the house-door after him with a nervous clang.

His errand led from there to a distant and very different point. Mechanically, knowing his way so well, he boarded a tram and stood on the outer platform as he was roughly speeded into the nether regions of the city. It was a far cry by distance from Cushing's up-to-date residence to the place where he was bound, and yet when he stepped off the car and found himself in the desired street, the difference was more apparent pungently than through any argumentation of miles and their fractions.

The man he sought lived in a squalid district seemingly reserved for youthful paupers. The streets were full of *peluchant* urchins and the crowding houses seemed to spill these lesser quantities into the streets as an overfull glass drops its gout of water. He made his way gently through their masses, found the dilapidated house he sought, and went up the long-condemned stairway to the familiar door.

A mellow, quiet voice bade him enter when he knocked, and he went into the room. It seemed there was nothing in the room but a man and a forest of books, but after a time even in that thicket of volumes one might make out a bed and a chair or two and the other meager necessities of a bodily frame that existed merely as an indispensable support and domicile to the spirit that dwelt therein.

The man was beyond middle age, bent and badly nourished, bearded and thickly thatched, and apparently most alive in the eyes and hands, both of which greeted the new-comer gladly as he entered.

"I have come," said Errolby, as ever direct and intent upon his own

business—as well he might be in such surroundings, for the man before him had none—"to ask you a question."

"I shall not be able to answer it," said his host, smiling in the obscurity of his great beard. "My experience is that the world was not made of dust, but of questions. And the answers were overlooked." He gathered up an armful of books from a chair and dropped them heavily upon the floor, with the consummate disregard of the man who considers books as he might others' untenable arguments and not at all in the spirit of the bibliophile to whom the volume itself is precious.

Errolby took the chair and looked around the place inattentively.

"Begin," said the other. He took up his pipe and filled it and waited in silence.

"Hilsinger," said Errolby, "I am at either the beginning or the end of life. I don't know which."

"Of course not," said the man indistinctly, as he stood occupied with his pipe and match. He dropped into the chair before the table and pushed his book away. "Of course not," he said again.

Errolby had rehearsed his story so thoroughly before, that same night, that he did not offer to go into it again. "There are insuperable legal barriers between her and me. We have made the effort in every direction to have them lawfully removed. But assistance has been denied."

Hilsinger nodded curtly and puffed at his pipe. The case was stated. Errolby had no more to say, no more that he need say, and both were deep in the contemplation of the situation. The silence was a long one, broken only by the sound of Hilsinger's teeth on his amber mouthpiece. Then he shifted his position slightly, and holding his briar in his two hands regarded it steadfastly.

"Do you remember this—" he said. "Every action is merely an addition. To say that it is free is to say that there is more in the total than there is in the added elements. This is as absurd in philosophy as it is in arithmetic."

"Don't give me a stone," said Errolby, lightly.

"It is a mere matter of combination of old, old, cut-and-dried fragments," said the elder, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Again I would remind you—if we knew really the relative position of all the phenomena that constitute the actual universe, we could at this moment calculate, as surely as astronomers, the day, the hour, the minute when England, for example, will evacuate the Indian kingdom, when such a criminal, yet unborn, will assassinate his father, when such a poem, yet unconceived, will be written. The future is contained in the present, just as the undeniable properties of a triangle are contained in its definition."

"Did he say true?" said Errolby.

"Assuredly. At our birth we were given certain blocks of certain shapes. Out of these we frame our designs. There are thousands of combinations, but the kindergarten has been conducted for so many centuries that not one of these combinations but has been offered again and again."

"Am I, is she, then nothing but a combination of certain angles?"

"Nothing," said Hilsinger placidly.

"It has all been done, often done, many times done."

"And what is the result?"

"Result? Nothing. Some combinations are prettier than others, that is all."

Errolby was forced to smile. "Is there no blood in you?" he asked quaintly.

"I really do not know. I do not care. If I cut my finger, it will bleed. I shall be no different after that loss of material matter."

"Let me put my question differently. Is it nothing to you that a human being should suffer?"

"Nothing," said Hilsinger. It was his favorite word.

"Why not?" said Errolby.

"Because it has never made any difference," said the other. "To learn, to know, to find out—these are the important things. And these only that one may help others to learn and to

know and to find out. A pig may suffer. Anything may suffer. What of it?"

"But a life spent in wretched misery undeserved?"

"A life?" Hilsinger snapped his fingers. "Undeserved? I might deserve a medal, a pension, anything you choose to name. Would it advance me one jot or one tittle on my way? Certainly not. I should die just the same clay with or without it. Deserve? Nonsense. What we get does not matter. We do not matter. Enlightenment, progress, knowledge!"

"For what?" demanded Errolby.

"For the purpose of life," said Hilsinger.

Another silence endured between them. "You give me nothing," said the younger man, at last.

"What did you expect to get?" demanded the other. "My blessing on an act that you will either commit or not commit according to your own volition? What does it matter? If you take this woman to yourself, what then? If you do not, what then? I shall expect the sunrise tomorrow at the appointed time. We have six thousand suicides annually; we have one hundred and sixty thousand insane now alive in our asylums; we have incalculable thousands of divorces, of murders, of abductions—we do not lack any of the supposedly *bouiversant* crimes that human beings may commit. And are we shaken in our foundations? Not a bit. Individuals pay or do not pay their own penalties just as they pay or do not pay for their food and lodging. Does it retard or hasten? Neither, my good Errolby; it simply does not matter. I read in the paper that a man has committed murder. Am I any different? Is the world better or worse? I find a new book published, or I hear a savant speak. I sit and read or listen. Something is happening. Something is being done. I am different. The world will in due course be different. There you are!"

"Books!" said Errolby, with a short laugh.

"Books are a mere medium of effort," said the older man. "As books, of course, they deserve your laugh of contempt. One can put a match to them and they will burn. But even then they make a light. Individuals—great heaven, what is an individual? One of a mass of maggots. Hundreds have been wiped out of existence in one catastrophe. What then? Has the progress of the world gone backward or forward one eighth of an inch? Certainly not. What does it matter whether you are happy or not? Nothing, nothing, nothing."

Errolby's lips twisted into a mask of a smile as he rose. "You are a machine," he said.

"Of course I am," said Hilsinger.

The guest stood a moment looking down at the books on the table. Then suddenly he jerked up his head and faced Hilsinger. "Theories, ideas and thoughts," said he, "where do they bring us?"

"They have brought us as far as we have gone."

"And how far is that?"

"At least so far that we may know when a certain combination of the blocks has evermore been refused by the kindergarten authorities," said Hilsinger. There was a gentle tone in his voice as he said it.

"Ah, now we get somewhere!" said Errolby. "You, in my place, would not submit that combination for approval?"

"Certainly not," was the answer.

Errolby stood a moment more, then took up his hat. "Good night," he said.

His host made no attempt to detain him. "Good night," he echoed, and pulled his book toward him.

Errolby went down the sodden stairs at a normal pace and threaded his way through the mass of children who never seemed to sleep except in one another's immature arms, as mere babies bore other babies to and fro on the streets. He dispensed his coppers inattentively as he went along, caring nothing for the shouts of delight that accompanied the stampede of each lucky recipient toward the candy shop. At the corner he boarded a car and went away from the city of dreadful night.

It was quite a walk from his alighting place to her home, but as he accomplished it, even in those long solitary moments in the darkened street he had no thought of retrospect to give to the counsel he had received. There was something within him that paid no heed to it, yet he had wanted it poignantly.

At her door he waited until the servant admitted him and then he walked straight into her music-room. She was sitting at a little desk writing a letter. Her black gown seemed jealously to cover her beauty, but the hands and the face of her were all the more refulgent in their white perfection for the reason of that. She turned and looked at him as he entered, and sat very still.

Errolby crossed the room and stood near her. "Are you ready to go?" he asked in a natural tone.

She looked up into his eyes, calmly, for an instant without replying. Then she laid down her pen and rose. "I am quite ready," she said quietly.



WELL ACQUAINTED WITH HIM

FISHER—Your son owes me twenty dollars.

PARKER—Lucky fellow!

"Who is?"

"My son."

THE CONQUERING CARLOTTA

By Jeanette I. Helm

I SHOULD not have noticed them particularly if the man had not been so absurdly devoted to the woman. That is a natural order of things usually, but it did not seem so in this case. He was a tall young fellow; a German, I imagined, from his upward-curving mustache-ends and his erect, well-set figure, with a frank, handsome face which was oddly familiar to me, though I had never seen him before; while she was a heavy woman, at least ten years his senior, with a fat, sleepy face. They had the seats just opposite mine, and from the time of their entrance the man had fussed about her and waited on her slightest wish with a devotion which seemed absolutely ludicrous to me in view of its object.

We were almost the only passengers on the express from Boston that snowy day, and the weariness of the journey, which threatened to be delayed beyond usual, made me give my fellow-travelers more attention than I should otherwise have done. I wondered idly what their relations to each other might be. Possibly she was a rich aunt; she could hardly be his mother, for she was not old enough, and moreover she was as unmistakably plebeian as he was of the best German type. Maybe, then, she was some star and he was the stellar satellite? Another glance at the dull, fat face convinced me that it was not a familiar one in either music or the drama, nor in fact did it seem a possible one.

I became conscious at this point that I was staring rather too fixedly at the object of my speculations,

and turning my eyes away hurriedly, met those of the man in the seat behind hers. To my surprise I read in them a certain pride and approval which irritated me peculiarly. Did he really think, I asked myself, that I was admiring his companion, or that everybody shared his absurd infatuation? The idea annoyed me so much that I got up from my seat and strolled away to the smoker where a couple of undaunted traveling-men were keeping up their spirits with a game of cards. After watching them for a while I went out on the platform, for it seemed to me that the train was halting at the station longer than usual. To my surprise there was no station, only a stretch of white below and a wall of blackness above from which the white flakes came drifting inexhaustibly into the circle of light cast by our lamps.

"Stalled, by Jove!" I said aloud disgustedly.

"What is the trouble?" asked a voice behind me in careful English spoken with a slight German accent. "Are we not to proceed any more?"

I wheeled abruptly to find my male neighbor behind me, peering over my shoulder into the darkness, with a troubled face.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"I can't say. We may stay here only for an hour or a day. The storm is a heavy one and we are taking along several extra baggage cars—I saw them being attached as I came into the station. The engine may not be able to pull us through the drifts."

"I know," he nodded. "But it

is a misfortune to be delayed now. We must get to New York tonight!"

"Oh, we may yet," I reassured. "At all events we shall have enough to eat and can make ourselves comfortable, as the car is not crowded."

Still his face remained clouded.

"It is not that," he murmured, half to himself. "She—we *must* get to New York tonight!"

He caught the conductor by the coat sleeve as the latter emerged white-powdered from the blackness, and began to talk to him eagerly and excitedly. I went over to the other side of the platform where a convenient angle made it possible for me to re-light my pipe, but even from there I could see that the conductor was listening with more respect than the average passenger received from him. Where had I seen the German's face, or one like it, before? I leaned against the railing and watched him while I racked my brains for the answer. An elusive memory, which hovered just beyond my reach, connected him in some way with my college days at Heidelberg, but I was convinced that I had never seen him there.

While I still puzzled over it the conductor passed on forward with another assurance that he "would do the best he could for her."

The German remained somewhat irresolutely on the platform. He gave me the impression of a messenger who fears to report bad tidings. This was growing decidedly interesting. Who was this mysterious she who made the usually autocratic conductor so obliging and held this good-looking young man in a state of subjection?

I have a habit—totally an unconscious one—when I am puzzled or thinking deeply, of whistling aloud some air. I was surprised to see the German, after a few minutes, start suddenly and turn toward me with an interested expression.

"Pardon me, sir," he said as he caught my eye, "but may I ask where you have heard that air that you are whistling?"

I stared at him in my turn with some wonder.

"Was I whistling?" I asked. "I really don't remember what I was whistling, in that case. Probably some popular tune or other. I do it without thinking. Could you repeat it for me, and then I could tell you where I heard it?"

"It was this," he answered quickly, and began to sing in a clear tenor an air which I recognized at once with some surprise as a Heidelberg Corps song, "*Alt' Heidelberg, du liebe Mutter.*"

"Oh, I remember now," I said. "It is a Heidelberg student song. It is odd I should have whistled that now. I haven't sung or heard it in years."

"You have been in Heidelberg, then?" he asked. "That is evident, since the song is only sung there at the Kneipe."

"I was there ten years ago," I answered.

"And of the Alemannia Corps," he asserted rather than asked.

"Yes, as much as an American could be," I replied in some surprise. "My friends were all of that Corps. That song was written by one of them, Conrad Von Stettin. Perhaps you knew him?"

"Indeed, yes," he answered, with a smile which was both singularly charming and familiar. "He is my brother."

"There!" I cried. "That explains it all. I could not imagine where I had seen you before or what made me connect you with Heidelberg. So you must be Max Von Stettin, '*der kleiner Max*,' as Conrad used to speak of you many times to me. And I am Morris Stanway."

"I have heard my brother speak much and friendly of you," he said, his face lighting up, "and it is a great pleasure to have met you, Mr. Stanway."

We shook hands warmly and I asked him to come with me into the smoking-compartment, where we renewed our mutual associations over a bottle of ale.

The more I saw of Max Von Stettin the better I liked him. He had all his elder brother's geniality and air of breeding combined with a charm of

manner all his own. Conrad, he told me, was out in Patagonia with a party engaged in scientific research (he had always been something of a scientific enthusiast even at Heidelberg), which accounted for the long gap there had been in our correspondence.

"And you," I asked, refilling his glass, "are in the army still, I suppose?" Conrad told me in his last letter that you were in the Schwarzer Braunschweiger Regiment, and on your way to a First Lieutenancy. Have you come over here on some diplomatic mission?"

To my surprise his face clouded over suddenly and he gave me such a suspicious and gloomy look that I could hardly believe him to be the same frank and charming companion of a moment ago.

"I beg your pardon, Herr Von Stettin—" I began, afraid that I had unknowingly offended him in some way, although in spite of my knowledge of the intricacies of the German code of honor I could not imagine what it was.

He stopped me with a wave of his hand.

"I am no longer in the army," he said, and rose abruptly. I suggested that we have another bottle of ale, but he answered constrainedly that he was not thirsty and must go back, as he was expected. He made me a stiffly formal bow, and passed out of the smoking-compartment. I finished my glass, cursing myself inwardly for my unfortunate question, and greatly puzzled as to the cause of Von Stettin's annoyance. At last a sudden inspiration came to me. He was undoubtedly here on some secret mission which made it necessary that he should not be connected openly with the army, and my unlucky guess had put him in a delicate position. I could not see, myself, the reason for so much annoyance over it, as my remark had been a natural one, but I put it down to what I knew of the peppery German blood, and dismissed the matter from my mind with a fresh cigar. Tired at last, however, of the stale smoke and staler stories of my traveling companions, I started back to

my seat in the other car, noticing as I went that the drifts were piling up higher and that there were no signs of further progress. As I came down the aisle I saw Von Stettin preceding me, carefully balancing a tray with a glass of beer. Suddenly I remembered his companion. In the name of all probabilities would a German officer of good blood be likely to travel on a secret diplomatic mission with such a woman?

"Aha, friend Max," I thought to myself. "Small wonder you were embarrassed at my question. Now there will be some trouble!"

Yet as I remembered how unfeignedly glad he had been to see me and how openly proud he had seemed before of his absurd companion, I was still more puzzled as to what course to adopt. I could not well ignore them, as my seat was directly opposite, and if I showed my opinion too openly I knew that Von Stettin's fiery temper would be sure to take offense. As I approached them slowly, debating this in my mind, the woman said something to Von Stettin, who turned quickly and came toward me.

"Ah, Mr. Stanway, my brother's good friend," he said, with all his former cordiality, "I was hoping you would arrive soon. I have been telling Carlotta about you and our so fortunate meeting, and she is anxious to meet you. Permit me that I present madame my wife."

I have traveled much and have acquired, I hope, a certain amount of aplomb; but I was so staggered by this unexpected turn in events that it was several seconds before I recovered enough to bow over the soft fat hand that Frau Von Stettin extended to me, and murmur the necessary compliments.

"My husband's friends I am glad to meet," she said in a sleepy, fat voice which matched the rest of her person. "Max, he is lonely sometimes, I think, in this great big land with only me—"

Von Stettin interrupted her.

"Never lonely when I am with you, *liebchen*," he said warmly.

His wife laughed fatly.

"*Du schmeichler!* Ach, here comes

the conductair; it is to say that we proceed, *hein?*"

She finished her beer and looked at the approaching conductor with more interest than she had hitherto shown. He stopped before us with a troubled face.

"No signs of relief as yet," he said. "They are going to try and get the snowbreaker through to us, if possible. Otherwise we cannot get through these drifts with such a heavy train. I'm afraid we are going to have trouble out there, madam. Your man is half drunk and can't manage them, and they are tearing around pretty lively."

I stared at him, wondering what on earth he was referring to, but Frau Von Stettin sat up with a sudden energy which contrasted strangely with her former apathy.

"*Ach*, they miss me, *die geliebte*," she cried. "I will go to them and tell them that they soon have something to eat."

She rose to her feet with a quick, panther-like lightness that I had not thought her capable of, and put out her hand as Von Stettin also rose.

"*Nein*, you stay here, you and Mr. Stanway. It is best that I go alone, then there will be no trouble. Give me my cloak and I will go at once."

Mechanically I watched Von Stettin wrapping her up assiduously in the huge fur garment, and saw her walk quickly, and still with that strange, new lightness of step, down the aisle of the car after the conductor, while a swarm of questions and conjectures floated through my head. Who were "they"? I could think of nothing but children, but why were they in a separate car and attended apparently by a drunken man, and why should the conductor himself come to tell her how they were? Could she be some royal personage traveling incognito? I knew not what to think.

Meanwhile Von Stettin had re-seated himself calmly as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened.

"Poor man," he observed amusedly. "I believe he was really frightened, that conductor."

I clutched desperately at a question,

"Why should he be frightened?"

Von Stettin shrugged his shoulders.

"He does not know her as well as I do."

I felt myself going deeper into a maze of bewilderment. As I opened my mouth to ask Von Stettin if they were children, and how many he had, a long, drawn-out sound like the howl of an enraged beast smote the frosty silence.

I sprang to my feet.

"That was an animal," I said. "Can there be some escaped wild beast around here? Hark, that sounded like a lion's roar," as the sound repeated itself. I peered out into the snowy darkness, half expecting to see the luminous eyes of some wild creature staring into mine.

"It was a lion's roar," observed Von Stettin calmly. "Said Pasha, I think. He always roars the loudest. But don't be alarmed; Carlotta can always manage them."

"In the name of reason where are they, and what are they doing here?" I cried irritably as another howl quivered through the air.

Von Stettin stared at me.

"I thought you knew. They are my wife's animals, ten lions and six panthers that she is going to exhibit for the first time in New York. You surely must have recognized her; her portraits are in all places. 'Carlotta the Conquering,' they call her," he added proudly.

Before I could answer, if indeed I had been able to say anything, the door opened and Frau Von Stettin reëntered. Her light hair was somewhat disarranged and her cheeks were flushed, but otherwise she was as calmly indolent as before.

"They were hungry and cold, the kittens," she said, sinking heavily into her seat. "Also a little playful, especially Pach. I had to scold them well. Did you not hear them crying?"

"Are you never afraid?" I asked foolishly.

Her eyes flashed at me. They were blue, of the kind I have only seen in two faces, the one a child's, the other a

monk's. In both, the characteristics were the same, full-lidded, with a weary keenness, as of one who had seen and fathomed all things and gave no secrets in return; odd in the child, and striking in the monk, but in this woman's heavy face producing the effect of a strangely repellent fascination.

"I am never afraid," she said with a slow scorn. "The day I am afraid I come out in ribbons, *mein Herr*."

I made some clumsy apology which she hardly noticed. Her face had resumed its normal stolidity, and with unconventional frankness she announced that she was sleepy, so I withdrew to my own seat while she settled herself for a nap, and Von Stettin went out for another look at the weather. Indeed, I was glad of a chance to rearrange my very scattered ideas. The more I thought of it the more hideously improbable it seemed. To think of the brother of my friend, belonging to one of the oldest and proudest families, and a member of a crack regiment in Berlin, deliberately leaving all this to not only marry, but follow around and publicly adore, a common lion tamer! And for what reason? If she had been pretty or even charming—but this heavy, stupid woman! I looked over to where she sat buried in her fur cloak, sleeping more, snoring heavily, and I could not resolve it into anything but madness, try as I would.

In the meantime the snow had grown lighter, and presently shouts from ahead told us that the snow-breaker was being forced toward us. Von Stettin hurried in and joyfully made us certain of the fact that we might expect to see New York before morning. After much toil and more tedious waits, we were half pulled, half pushed out of our slough, and at last arrived in New York at three in the morning. I was so cramped from trying to sleep on a seat, and so exhausted from lack of food, the diner having been dropped off to lighten our load, that I had little thought to give to my companions when we finally arrived, but parted from them with a

handshake and a promise to look them up later on. I was even glad to be rid of them, for the lions had howled horribly all the time, and I had had an uneasy feeling that they might break loose at any moment. So it was with thankfulness that I got into a cab, and driving to my usual hotel secured a room and tumbling into bed, fell asleep almost at once.

After a good rest, a bath and a hearty breakfast, the events of the night before seemed so much like an unpleasant dream that I was in no mood to recall them, and as my stay in the city was limited, and I was kept busy, I forgot completely about Von Stettin and his uncouth wife, until passing the lighted entrance of a big vaudeville house one evening I saw displayed on a huge transparency the announcement: "Carlotta the Conquering. Wonderful Dompteuse!"

I stopped and on an impulse of curiosity went in and bought a seat, the last one in the house, so the ticket man informed me, which happened to be in the box nearest the stage. I was only just in time, for the preceding "turn" had been finished as I entered and half-a-dozen stage hands were busily putting up the great iron cages for the animals. As I watched them I thought of Von Stettin and wondered again how he could endure seeing his wife appear in a performance like this. Of course, she was not billed under his name, and only a few like myself who had known his family could appreciate the disgrace, but none the less I could not bring myself to his point of view.

The cages ready, the men wheeled in the vans containing the animals, and a burst of applause greeted the dompteuse as she came out from the side and bowed to the audience. I leaned forward eagerly. She certainly looked better than she had done on the train; she was well corseted and her neck and arms rose white and plump as a child's above her black-spangled dress. Her face was delicately flushed and her eyes bright as she smiled and bowed to the big audience. She seemed awake for once.

The men opened the doors of the animals' cages as she slipped inside the large cage, and the beasts ran in, circling around her and taking their places on various-sized pedestals in obedience to her commands and the cracking of her whip. As the performance went on I could hardly believe her to be the same woman I had seen in the cars that snowy night. Then she had been heavy, dull and lethargic; now she was all lightness and grace, incessantly moving about the cage with the panther-like step I had before noticed, and keeping up a stream of sharp, shrill commands to her animals, mingled with caressing words and pats. The great cats obeyed sullenly, I thought, the panthers trying to evade and slip behind her, and the lions snarling and striking at her with furtive paws. It was a fascinating though sickening sight to me, and I could not keep my eyes away from her as she teased the great beasts with lumps of raw meat, or laid her head fondly against the muzzle and wrinkled nose of the largest of them all. It was a relief to me when at last she drove them one by one back into the cages and the iron doors clanged behind them. At length only one lion, the largest and crossdest of all, was left alone in the cage with her. His act, so I learned later, was to pretend mutiny and refuse to leave, until in mock despair she threw down her whip and steel bar and going over to him put her arms about his neck and kissed him, after which he was to trot off obediently. His rebellion, however, was so well acted that it deceived us all, and I could hear frightened murmurs all around me as the big cat struck at her with all claws out, and snarled viciously as she snapped her whip at him. When she threw down her whip and bar and apparently turned her back for an instant, he growled and crouched for a spring. At that moment one of the attendants opened the door and came in with another bar, evidently believing something had gone wrong. Whether the unexpected entrance angered the lion

I don't know, but before the man could dart back again the great brute leaped upon him and knocked him flat. A gasp like a great sigh went up from the house, and the attendants sprang forward. Carlotta motioned them back.

"Steh still!" she called sharply, and then to the lion she commanded, "Au, Pach, au!"

The lion did not move, but stood with one foot on the prostrate man, his tail waving slowly to and fro. It was a terrible moment and I shall never forget it. Then, while the house seemed one held breath, Carlotta leaned forward and looked the lion in the face with the smile she wore so constantly.

"*Mach' schön*, Pach," she said sharply. "*Geh!*" Then as he still did not move she struck him lightly across the nose with her open palm. Breathlessly we watched for what seemed an eternity, but was really only a moment; and then with a grunt the lion dropped to the ground and turning shambled off into the cage, which closed quickly behind him. For still another moment there was silence, and then, as the attendants rushed in and lifted the fallen man who was more frightened than hurt, there was such a roar of applause that the building reverberated. Women cried and men shouted excitedly, while Carlotta stood in the front of the stage bowing and smiling as calmly as before. Someone who seemed strangely like myself, after pounding a pair of gloves to rags, put on a coat any way and left the box hurriedly to hasten to the stage entrance. To the doorkeeper who objected at first, I said that I was a friend of "hers," and at last he let me pass. I ran into Von Stettin hurrying by with a mug of beer in his hand, and caught him by the arm, for he did not seem to recognize me in his haste and excitement.

"Your wife, is she all right?" I stammered rather incoherently, feeling all at once the senselessness of my actions.

"Oh, it is you, Mr. Stanway?" said Von Stettin. "Yes, my wife she is

undisturbed as usual, only she demands some beer, so I bring it."

In his excitement his careful English flew to the winds.

"Will you not come and see her?" he asked, evidently impatient to be gone. I hesitated, conscious still more of the foolish part I was playing, but something drew me on. I followed him into the large, bare room where Carlotta sat on the end of one of the panthers' cages, swinging her feet and talking in her French-German to one of the attendants.

"Ach, here is the beer at last," she cried. "I am so durstig!"

She took the stein from Von Stettin's hand, and with a nod at me raised it to her lips and poured it down in a manner which would have made a corps student jealous of his reputation. Then she handed the empty mug to her husband with a sigh of relief.

"It is not like our Muenchener," she said, "but it tastes good when one has thirst. My cloak, Maxchen, *bitte*."

"You are none the worse for your narrow escape this evening, I hope?" I asked rather stupidly, as Von Stettin brought her fur coat and wrapped her up in it carefully.

She turned faintly surprised eyes on me.

"Herr Gott, what is it that you call an escape?"

"Why, from the lion, just a while ago," I persisted, feeling nevertheless rather foolish under her steady gaze.

She snapped her fingers as I have seen the peasant women do in the Rhine country.

"Ach, jemine!" she said contemptuously. "That Pach, he know better than to touch me. He knows that I fear not him nor anything else, and so he fears and dare not disobey me; and because he fear he love me also. It is only Gottlieb that has a fright, and that is all." She turned to Max with a careless dismissal of the subject.

"I am hungry," she said with the simple directness of a child. "Let us get something to eat."

"Won't you both come with me to Reisenbrau's?" I interposed quickly.

"I'll promise you a good drink of beer there, even if it isn't quite equal to the Rathskeller."

"Can one get to eat Kuschlimusch and Gestoeft Kohl Kopf?" she asked.

"We can try for them at all events," I answered, "but I know you can get Sauerbraten or Rollomopps there."

"Then let us go by all means," she said eagerly and took the arm I offered, leaving her husband to follow with the rest of her numerous wraps. I got a carriage and we drove to Reisenbrau's, where we had a typical German supper. I saw one or two people I knew glance curiously at my companions, especially at Carlotta, whose face grew redder and redder after every dish and glass of beer. She talked little and devoted herself scientifically to the one business of eating, leaving the conversation to Max and me. At length she yawned and said with her customary frankness that she wanted to go home to bed. I left them at the door of their hotel and walked back to mine; but whether it was the scene I had witnessed that night or the new and puzzling thoughts roused by it, I was kept tossing wakefully the greater part of the night.

I had made all my arrangements to leave New York the following day, for my business was completed, and as I disliked the city and was always glad to leave it, there was nothing to keep me longer. The next morning, however, I told the surprised hotel clerk, who knew my habits well, that I should stay on indefinitely. The fact was, I felt an interest in Von Stettin as the link which bound me, however distantly, with Conrad and the far-off Heidelberg days. I should not see him again for some time, possibly never, as they sailed for London when Carlotta's four weeks at the Amphitheatre were finished, and she had told me that she hated America and did not wish to return another season. I naturally wished to see as much of him as I could, so every night I watched the performance from in front and then took supper with them at some one of the German restaurants.

During this time I must confess that I was becoming very much more interested in Carlotta than I had deemed possible or even prudent, and I occupied much of my time in studying her. The undoubted power and fascination she possessed over animals, and seemingly over men also, puzzled as well as annoyed me; and as I saw the devotion, almost infatuation, of all the keepers and attendants, I grew more interested in finding out the cause of it. I could now well understand anyone admiring her as I had seen her in the arena with her animals, for there she was in her element, and had much of their savage grace and beauty; but as I saw her afterward, over-eating and drinking, sleepy and stupid, I was left wondering. Yet though she repelled me mentally and physically at times, I could not help liking her in spite of myself for a certain childlike simplicity and good-nature which was oddly combined with a shrewdness of wit that showed her peasant origin. It was a strange problem which grew in interest the more it baffled me.

One evening, on going behind the scenes as usual, I found Carlotta there alone and evidently waiting for me, for she looked up and rose with a smile as I came in.

"Where is Max?" I asked as she gave me her hand.

"Ach, der armer is in bed with a most bad cold," she said carelessly. "You will have me alone to take care of for supper, Herr Stanway."

"I shall do my best," I said, helping her to put on her fur coat. "Unless you prefer to go directly back and be with Max. Another night will do just as well for our supper in that case."

"Nein, nein," she said frankly. "I am hungry and what good should I do Maxchen to come home and tell him that? He would rather that I ate with you and I also prefer it. You are not by chance afraid to go alone with me, Mr. Stanway, *hein*?"

Her eyes met mine with a faintly mocking gleam in their weary keenness. She was looking unusually well

that evening, in a dress of black spangles that showed deep red glimmering lights as she moved.

I laughed rather confusedly.

"Why should I be afraid, Frau Von Stettin?"

She shrugged her shoulders lightly.

"Ach weh, one fears sometimes what one knows not, Herr Stanway, and you do not know me yet. Is it not so?"

I laughed to hide the annoyance I felt.

"The unknown has fascination for me, but no fear," I said, meeting her eyes steadily. "Do you think you can teach it to me then, Frau Von Stettin?"

She took my arm with a smiling glance.

"There is mooch I can do. Perhaps that is also among it. Let us go to supper, then, Herr Invincible."

When we were seated at a corner table in the restaurant she touched my arm as I was about to follow the supper order with the usual one of beer.

"No beer tonight. Let us have wine, Mr. Stanway, if you will?"

I pushed the card over toward her.

"Choose what you like," I answered.

Somewhat to my surprise she selected an excellent dry brand of champagne. Her taste in liquors had, so far in my knowledge of her, never risen above beer. She drank the wine, however, in the same fashion, in large glassfuls, until I began to wonder what the result might be. Unfortunately she caught my expression with her customary quickness as she refilled her glass for the second time.

"You are afraid I will take too mooch?" she asked. "And that my head will go round like Mlle. Delmar's bicycle wheels, so? *Nein*, there is no fear of that, Herr Stanway. I need it too mooch clear in my business. Also I know just when to stop, *siehst du*?"

"I am certainly not afraid you will ever lose your head," I responded,

reddening, however, with the knowledge that she had guessed my thoughts so easily.

"I do not care mooch for the champagne," she said, gazing reflectively at the bubbles rising and breaking in her glass. "I like the beer best; it makes me sleepy and then I do not talk. Champagne gives me a tongue, and for that I do not take it often. But tonight I wish the tongue and not the sleep. Tonight I wish to talk with you, Herr Stanway." And she flashed me one of her brilliant smiles.

"I am very much flattered," I said, returning her smile. "I am glad you chose the champagne tonight if it gives me that privilege, Madame Carlotta."

Indeed there was something strangely astir in Carlotta tonight which made me wonder if I were nearing the solution of the problem, and which woke, in spite of myself, an answering unrest. If champagne gave her a tongue it also gave her an unusual lightness and brilliancy of eyes and face, which yet did not seem to come alone from the wine, but rather was the stirring of latent depths. How could I have ever thought her stupid and homely, I wondered now as I watched her. This was the Carlotta of the ring, her listless eyes wide and strongly compelling, and her voice a rich, caressing depth instead of a guttural drawl. Had she, after all, hidden stores of feeling and expression of which I had been in ignorance all this time? I caught myself abruptly back to realities which were fast slipping from me.

She smiled again, a swift smile, which held one compellingly.

"Herr Stanway," she said, leaning toward me, "you have seen *der kleiner* Max, and you have seen me, and you have wondered why. *Nein*," as I made an involuntary gesture of dissent, "I have read in your eyes that you wondered, and that is why I am talking with you tonight. I care not what any man think, I; but you are the friend of Max and his brother, and so you I will make to understand. Tell me now, Mr. Stanway, what did you think of me the day that we first meet?"

I was silent, for I really did not know what to say.

"So? Well, I will tell you what you thought." She checked each item off on her fingers. "'Old, ugly, fat, stupid! *Gott in Himmel*, why did he do it?'"

Positively the woman was uncanny. I tried desperately to shake my head, to say something to turn the course of the conversation, but still I could not. I had a strong conviction that things were going too fast, and where they would lead I dared not think. Only I could not, would not, stop them now.

"Well, why did he do it?" she repeated, bending over until her face with its mocking eyes was close to mine. "He is ten years younger than I, he is of the nobles, I am peasant born; he is educated, an officer and a scholar, while I know nothing but the animals and perhaps through them the men also, for animals and men can be tamed in much the same way if one but chooses, *mein Herr*. Yet in spite of all this he has married me, and adores me foolishly, as you have seen. Then why? Why has he left all that he had of position and friends to marry me and follow me around while I exhibit the animals? Will you not answer me that? Has not your studying of me in the ring, the restaurant, brought you the wisdom yet, Herr Stanway?"

Her voice was soft, low, yet distinct; her eyes held mine, and for a space we looked at each other silently. Then all at once there seemed to come up before my eyes the scene of that first night in the Amphitheatre; the lion Pacha, fierce and determinedly rebellious in his brute strength, conquered by the power and fearlessness of this strange woman. What was it that held him then, what was it that drew me now even where I would not go? Did she then mistakenly think that I was like him, to be tamed and made to do her bidding?

Suddenly she laughed, the clear, triumphant tones I had heard only in the ring, and threw herself back in her chair.

"You do not speak, Herr Stanway,"

she cried. "And yet you have told me why."

"How, then, in heaven's name?" I cried, leaning toward her in my turn.

Her eyes suddenly steeled to command.

"If I tell you will you promise to go back tomorrow to your dear, proper Boston?" she mocked.

"Tell me why first?" I cried again in a voice which seemed to come from someone else, so hoarse and unnatural it was.

She rose and threw her fur cloak across her shoulders.

"How?" She turned away, and then looked back at me over her shoulder with her swiftly mocking smile. "Because you would do the same as Max yourself, Herr Stanway!"

I tried to speak, to repudiate, to deny, but I could not. For with her words it was as if a lightning flash smote bare the truth, and I knew that she was right. Silently I rose and followed her out of the restaurant.



THE MAN-CHILD

By Elsa Barker

O WONDERFUL small being that my Love
 Made of his dreams before he dreamed of me!
 Trembling I bend above
 Your terrifying softness, for I see
 Something in you that made the stars afraid
 Before their moons were made.
 Strong is my soul to struggle with all things;
 But with the pressure of your powerless hand
 My will is like a bird with broken wings,
 And all my words are written in the sand.

And she who bore you is the sacred vase
 That held the wine of Love's high sacrament,
 The still Madonna to whose bower was sent
 The angel of God's grace.

No other worshiper will come like me,
 O man-child! with such offerings for your sake;
 For I know all the secrets of the sea,
 And of men's souls that ache;
 I know the mystery in women's eyes,
 The mute word never said,
 The laws that are the wonder of the wise,
 And why they smile so strangely who are dead.

MRS. DEVERILL

By Vanderheyden Fyles

THIS time I felt sure the disturbance was real and not mere sleepy imagination. The previous strange jangling of the crystals pendant from the chandelier over my bed, might have been a troubled dream. The prolonged and delicate operation I had come from had been very exhausting, and perhaps it had strained my nerves more than a surgeon of my years and experience would care to admit even to himself. But the female shadow, silhouetted against the ground-glass door between my bedroom and the general hall, seemed surely a fact. I could distinguish it only dimly, at first; then with increasing clearness as it hurried along the narrow hallway to the stairs outside my door. There it paused, and presently turned back a step or two. And the black, sharp outlines trembled. But the hesitancy was brief. In a moment the figure turned again and fled down the stairs in the haste of panic. Everything was hazy from my utter weariness and from the stillness of the early morning hours all about me. The death-like silence of the shadow's emergence and of its flight made it seem a ghostly dream.

The sleep that I fell back to—if indeed it had been interrupted at all—was at first uneasy with the fact of having been disturbed, rather than with consideration of the peculiar form of the disturbance. Although a bachelor nearing sixty years, and of quiet and perhaps over-cautious habits, it was not because of penuriousness that I suffered lack of dignity and some inconvenience by living in an apartment over shops, but for the sole reason that

at most there would be only one other resident in the building besides myself. Mine was the third floor of what had been one of those spacious old New York dwellings, in the downtown streets just off Fifth avenue, that try awkwardly and rather pitifully, to compete with encroaching trade by reducing their aristocratic lower floors to inadequate shops for hairdressers and dyers, and "ladies' tailors." With a sort of cynicism of the times, the less useful upper stories are allowed the moldering dignity of their other days, and are rented to lone men, like myself, who strive to rear something of a home around themselves. The mellowed spaciousness and obsolete grandeur of the mantels and the finishings suited at once my aging tastes and my massive furniture and cumbersome bookshelves. It was a home to them and me. And when the shops below had closed out the twentieth-century flurry of their days and settled into a darkened and deserted brief respite, my home and I spent long, peaceful evenings together in gratifying meditation and research, and long nights of contented sleep. I hardly had known the man who was my sole fellow-lodger for fifteen years or more. It was enough that he was as quiet as I. Indeed, he could have become quieter only by sinking into the eternal sleep, which, in fact, he did, two months ago, to my profound grief, though I was aware of having laid eyes on him not more than four or five times before the shadow of him, carried feet first, momentarily darkened the transparent door to my home, and then was gone forever.

The possibility of a less somnolent

inhabitant of the apartment above worried me to the point of renting it myself, solely so that I could not possibly be disturbed. Only the fervent pleading of Mrs. Pell for the rooms for a young friend of hers swerved me from my plan. The young woman, she told me, was a student at Barnard, and was of most quiet and solitary habits, being engrossed in her studies and also wholly unacquainted in New York. Why so old and, in her dignified, unobtrusive way, so important a resident of New York as Mrs. Pell should be especially concerned with a stranger to the city excited enough curiosity in me to inquire where she had come to know the girl. And when she said that young Dick had met her somewhere or other in the country, I even hinted at this being the cause of her son's redoubled energy in his father's office.

"We are, as yet, unacquainted with the girl's relatives," she had said: "and, of course, nothing would be settled until his father's return." And if you know dear old Martha Pell as well as I, you realize that that remark quite closed the subject.

In any case, I hope I have passed the age of concerning myself with the young folk and their loves. The whole affair faded from my mind, except when I occasionally looked with some longing for the return of my old friend, Jacob Pell, at which times I felt passing gratitude for the unbroken quiet and unobtrusiveness of the girl whom I had never seen, and then let the whole matter slip from my mind.

As I sunk back to my disturbed sleep, it occurred to me that the fleeing female shadow should, in some way, cause me concern for young Dick Pell; but I was too weary to care very much, or even to be able to think why I should care. I seemed to be dreaming of cupids, in countless numbers, who were pelting my stodgy old hide with arrows, when I awoke to find that the quick and excited rapping was not against myself, but against my door. As I sleepily threw a dressing-gown about me and made my way to the entry, I discerned that the figure now

silhouetted against the glass, though female, was wholly dissimilar to the one I had seen flit past and down the stairs, or had dreamed I saw. Whoever it was, though, I was in no mood to receive the disturber of my rest agreeably. Thrusting my head out of the door, I growled:

"What do you want, young woman?"

But even I was taken aback by the girl I saw. She was fragile of form and timid of bearing, and very young, it seemed; not more than eighteen, I should have said. And beneath the mass of light hair her delicate face was deathly white and screwed into a scowl of distress.

"You—you are a doctor?" she jerked out. "Come quick!" Then she wrung her hands, which had been pressed against her breast. "But it would be of no use, though!"

"Then what did you wake me for?" I wanted to retort. But something in her trembling, impotent distress made me modify my annoyance to a gruff, bear-like: "Well?"

"You must come," she said again. "You must help me somehow. Get into clothes; I'll wait in the hall here."

My temper was hardly mollified by her reference to my lack of clothing, with its accentuation of the fact that she was fully dressed, in a neat and girlish, though plain, house-gown.

"Time all decent, God-fearing people were undressed—three o'clock in the morning—or more!" I growled as I got myself into clothes.

When I came into the hall again the girl was propped against the wall, with her forehead pressed against a cool door-jamb and her eyes closed. But she was nervously conscious and alert, for as I neared her she drew herself together readily. Leading the way to the upper stairs she whispered: "Come!"

The door she led me through was to the front of her apartment, into what was, with me, a library, and was with her, apparently, as much a library as enough books for a few narrow shelves would make it, and,

for the rest, a pleasing sitting-room. The feminine touch was visible in the cozy comfort of it; but it was wholly without that fussy daintiness of vain women, or that bedlam of photographs and college colors of the hysterical girl. It suggested rather the amateur student; and, above all, the common-sense young person who had her tea-table because she needed it, her books because she enjoyed them, a few good engravings because she appreciated them; and nothing for show or sentiment. This much I took in at a glance. Then my eyes fell on a large, comfortable-looking arm-chair drawn close to the desk-like centre-table. Here it startled me to see an elderly man seated deep in the chair. One hand lay on the table and his head was sunk low on his chest.

I suppose my glance to the girl was questioning. She answered my thought, but as silently. Her lips trembled so that she could not speak, so she nodded her head.

I hurried across to the white-haired, portly, rather fine-looking old gentleman, placing my hand with unconscious vigor on his shoulder. His body sunk lower in the chair. His head dropped back. He was dead.

For the moment all thought of the girl or of the strange occurrences of the last few minutes were forgotten in the hope of saving a human life. I did not glance at the only other living occupant of the deserted house in the hush of early morning, but made a hasty examination of the corpse. For what had been an elderly, evidently authoritative man was that now, without hope of restoration. A weakened heart had stopped, that was all. For I did not fail to observe in my hasty examination that there was not the slightest sign of violence, nor even of any outward excitement. I looked up at the silent girl.

"Hopeless?" she managed to ask.

"The man is dead," I said.

"I knew it, I knew it," she moaned.

"What can I do?"

"Who is he?" I asked.

She looked at me as blankly as though I had spoken to her in some unknown language. "I don't know," she said very simply.

"You don't know?" I echoed, astounded. "You awaken me in the black of night and show me a dead man in your apartment, and then say you don't know who he is!"

"That's the worst part of the whole awful trouble," she murmured. "What shall I do?"

"What shall you do?" I retorted. "There are not many more than the one thing to do in a case of this sort."

"The police, you mean?" And terror displaced the look of appealing misery in her eyes.

"Or the coroner," I added.

"Not that, not that!" she cried, in a distraught wail. "Why—it would mean an examination, a searching into every detail."

"I should think most likely," I sneered. I began to wonder why I had not been more shocked at the situation. But, strangely enough, the slightest tangible thought of suspecting the girl before me was what really surprised me.

"Oh, it is not that I doubt my ability easily to prove the innocent manner of his death," she said. "There was no violence. Surely you can see that. His heart just stopped; the terror—the excitement—"

"What terror?"

"The excitement, I meant," she corrected, firmly. "I don't know just what; I wasn't in the room—" She stopped herself abruptly.

"You weren't in the room?"

She changed the drift. "He was writing," she said. "You can see."

I turned to the dead man in the chair. A pen was even then grasped in the lifeless fingers. I do not know exactly what I expected. I went around the table, close to him. Beneath the limp hand was a pad, and though the ink on the pen was not yet quite dry, there was not a mark on the top sheet of paper.

"What did he write?" I asked. I expect my tone was suspicious.

"I—I don't know," she answered.
 "Where is it, then?"

She looked bewildered. Then, evidently becoming terrified, for some reason, by my close questioning, she said: "He could not have written, then, after all."

The obvious untruth of the answer started my thoughts on another track. I took up the pad and, closely scrutinizing it, saw the tracings of a short note that evidently had been written on a piece of paper formerly above it. That sheet had been torn off, probably since the man's death. Had this girl with the innocent face destroyed it; or hidden it? Or had there been someone else present at the tragedy? Was the shadow that had seemed to darken my door an actuality or a dream? And had that other woman fled with the letter that had so excited the portly old gentleman as to cause his death?

A tall antique clock in the corner struck four slow times.

"Hark!" the girl said. "It will begin to grow light soon. This poor old man must be gotten away from here. Will you help me?"

I was astounded. "What," I exclaimed, "do you ask me—a substantial and I justly may say an honorable citizen—to be a party to a—a thing like this?"

"A thing like what?" she pleaded. "An unfortunate old gentleman is so overwrought by an occurrence that is no fault of his or anyone's—or anyone's," she emphasized, "that his weak heart gives out. That is done. It cannot be undone. Would to God it could be!"

My indignant retort was stifled by the genuineness of the misery in her outcry. Instead, I said: "What would you do?"

"Terrible as this is," she went on, "much, much more misery will come to many—very many—if the circumstances of his death become known."

"To you?" I suggested, as sardonically as my unreasonable sympathy for her would permit.

"My despair doesn't matter," she replied, in a dull, tired tone. Was I

correct in suspecting that her pause was designed to permit her to cast about for a fuller answer? "What if I told you," she went on, "that this man is—was—president of a bank here in New York; that worry over its tottering condition had ruined his health, had weakened his heart almost—finally—to the breaking point; that if the interview that culminated in his death were to become public there would be a mob of frenzied depositors at the door of that bank this morning that would mean the utter downfall of it, and suffering and immeasurable loss to thousands who had put their trust in him and it?"

There was something so simple and so sincere about her plea that I found myself inclined toward belief. But I felt that I must guard my credulity.

"But do you tell me these things?" I asked.

"I swear upon all that I hold sacred that they are true."

I wavered. My commonsense warned me against trusting a girl I knew nothing of, who had come into my quiet life in such a startling way. But could she have concocted so plausible a story in so short a time, and under the stress of such appalling circumstances?

"Of what bank, then, was this man president?" I asked.

She beat her hands in heavy, weary impotency against her sides. She lifted two tear-stained, helpless eyes to mine.

"I don't know," she murmured, weakly.

"You tell me you don't know who this man is, yet you assure me he is a bank president; you give me details of the ruinous consequences of his death, yet you cannot name the bank that would fall because of it. Why, how could I believe you if I wanted to?"

"I don't know," she murmured again, this time sinking limply into a chair. "There is no reason why you should. But you are the only hope I have to cling to."

I tried to think judiciously, impartially. I was tapping the paper pad

against my hand. Vaguely I became aware of a peculiar odor. It was a perfume I never had come upon before; though that, in my sort of life, was no cause for wonderment. But the odd fact was that I had not observed it when the girl came to my door, nor when I followed her up the narrow stairway. Nor, indeed, had I smelled it on entering the room. I sniffed. Surely it was not on the air. Then I lifted the pad to my nose. That was it! I endeavored to become a subtle actor. Fortunately for my success, undoubtedly, the girl was not looking at me. Her head was buried in her hands. She was not weeping, though. Evidently her distress was too complete for that. I wandered about the room with a show of casual aimlessness. The perfume was not on the air; and it was not on the dead man. Clearly the probably gloved hand that, in tearing off the top sheet of the pad, had left its perfume, had not so much as touched the dead banker. That was something to have discovered. I wandered toward the girl. But there was no suggestion of the scent about her. Then, in my pretense of glancing casually about the room, I saw a black mark on the white china door-knob. Coming close to it I found, as I had suspected, that it was smut from the fingers of a black glove. And as I leaned close to the knob I felt sure I could detect the same odor.

I turned suddenly to the girl.

"I may help you; I think I will," I said. "If you can give me a single piece of corroborative evidence that your story is true, I will help you."

"I—let me think," she muttered. She pressed her hand to her forehead. After a moment, she said: "Perhaps—perhaps there might be something in his pocket—some letters—"

I returned to the corpse. Trying first the breast pocket of his frock coat, I drew forth a handful of letters and documents of an official aspect. But the surprised horror was not the girl's, this time, but mine. For the papers showed his institution to be the Trust Company of New Netherlands, of

which Jacob Pell was first vice-president. This corpse that sat huddled in the great chair before me was, then, all that remained of the president whose every energy and every resource had been strained to carry the company through its crisis, while Jacob was away battling to retain confidence in its branches in Buffalo and Albany. And this girl, whose only friend in New York was Mrs. Pell, and who, I had reason to suspect, might some time be the wife of young Dick Pell, did not know who the man who had expired in the dead of night in her apartment might be! But proof of her innocence or guilt could wait. Even what appeared to be an entanglement enmeshing young Dick could wait. The saving of the bank must come first. However she was implicated, however she had come to know, this girl was right. Any mystery about the death of the president of the Trust Company of New Netherlands at this time of general panic and apprehension would mean disaster to thousands of homes, and ruin and perhaps dishonor to Jacob Pell and his dear family, the best friends an old fogey ever had.

The incidents leading to the tragedy might be as innocent as the girl who stood trembling before me made them seem, as innocent as I wanted to believe them. But before thousands of anxious, distraught depositors could be made to believe them so, the bank would have crumbled to utter ruin. The first gray light of the misty morning came through the curtains that hung across the windows. Action must be taken without delay. There was no time for hesitancy, or for calm consideration. The morning that was coming up over the dim, misty east, must start in confidence and tranquillity around that great granite pile in Wall street.

My brain teemed with disconnected suggestions. I could not think coherently. I only knew I must find a way, and find it immediately; and with no turning back. To extricate this innocent-seeming girl from an incriminating tangle might and might

not be wise and just. But to save the bank was right and paramount.

"I will help you," I said decisively, placing the papers back in the dead man's coat. "But how? What can you propose?"

She did not speak. She sat looking straight ahead of her. Her brow was puckered in a thought that seemed too great for her little head. When she spoke, she seemed to be addressing herself rather than me. But clearly the words were meant for both.

"If he had died elsewhere," she murmured; "if he had dropped dead from excitement in the street, or even on his own doorstep from exhaustion, there would be no suspicion, no investigation. Doubtless his family knew the condition of his heart; they must have. That would allay all doubt. If he only had not died here!"

"You mean what happened in this room?"

"I cannot explain it; I don't understand it myself," she answered. "But it would destroy public confidence in the bank. I heard—" Then checking herself, she said, "I know that to be so. Oh, do believe me! It is true."

My confused thoughts were taking shape. I was silent for some moments. Then I mumbled, "If he had died on his own doorstep."

"Yes?" she queried, quiveringly.

"It shall be so," I cried, with sudden firmness and decision. Then, as a look that combined wonderment with infinite relief suffused her delicate face, I burst forth, with a vehemence utterly unlike me: "Don't imagine that I do this for you. And don't think that this lets you out of the affair. It is only to set the panic public off the track this morning, to give dear old Jacob and the bank down there a fair start. And God grant that we'll all pull through!"

II

I NEVER let myself think of that hushed ride through the gray mists of the morning with the dead man in

between us. Neither of us spoke. I do not think either could have spoken. Nor did we stir, except when a lurch of the carriage cast the cold corpse against her, or over me. But mostly the poor old man sat upright as we drove him in quick silence to his home. I had told the sleepy nighthawk that I haled to the door of the empty house (a drunken one I had found, for greater safety) that our friend was intoxicated, and that we wanted to get him home as quietly and as secretly as possible. Poor dead old man, to be so sordidly misrepresented before his soulless body was yet quite cold! But we could not choose; we could not pause for thoughts or words in the cold mists of that awful morning.

And so between us, the white, delicate girl with soft yellow hair, and old grizzled I, we carried the dead banker down the narrow stairs and into the musty hack. His feet dragged behind him as we seemed to try to help him walk, and his hat was crushed down over his waxen face. When the first raw, penetrating light of dawn fell on him, I noted with a sickening horror that the tilted hat tallied in ghastly realism with our story of his bibulous excess.

We did not speak as we drove to the large house on an upper avenue, where his family slept in peaceful ignorance of their bereavement. But I was trying, in my confused mind, to give form to desperate plans. If the one I had relied on failed—if a member of his family or a servant discovered us—I should simply tell the truth, or as much of it as I knew. I half hoped our ghastly pilgrimage would come to that conclusion.

But it did not. The thing worked out as I had planned. No one saw us as we hauled the corpse from the carriage. Nor, after I had dismissed the drunken cabman and emptied my pocket-book to guarantee his silence, did anyone observe us dragging our burden up the broad stone steps. Propping him against the girl, I fumbled in his pockets for a latch-key. I did not let her see the rest. She was out-

side when I let the corpse fall gently to the floor of the spacious vestibule. And she did not see me bend the cold hand, the hand that had held the pen, about the key.

The president of the Trust Company of New Netherlands, returning utterly exhausted from a night session of his labors, had opened the outer door of his home and then collapsed and died as he was in the very act of unlocking the inner door. That was all.

We two, the girl who knew and I, walked fast and silently from the awful scene. We did not choose our course, but fled in and out of streets, anywhere that was away. We must have traversed many blocks when the girl turned suddenly to me.

"Now, what do you want to do with me?" she said.

My brain seemed too confused to think, even to quite comprehend.

"I cannot thank you for what you have done," she went on; "because any words that are made would be ridiculous in their inadequacy. But I will do anything you say. I mean, I won't run away."

"Oh," I sighed, "go where you like for all of me. I told you I did not do this for you." Subconsciously I realized that this was not quite true. But it made me feel less guilty to think that I had done it all for the bank and Jacob Pell, with no part incited by a helpless girl who had turned to me as her only hope.

"My name," she said, "is Stella Aines; and of course you know where I live. From there you can trace me to the only friends I have in New York. I don't want to go back there tonight; that is, if you will trust me to go somewhere else. You may come, of course, if you want to make sure where to find me; though I would rather you did not."

It must have been the morning mists that I felt on my cheeks. It would be silly for an old man's eyes to fill with tears. She was very white and spent and fragile in the gray light of the morning. "Go away," I said, as crustily as I could. She moved to do

so. Then she lifted my wrinkled old hand and I felt her kiss it lightly. Before I could steady my voice to tell her how foolish and annoying that was, she was gone.

It was strange enough for a man of my well-regulated habits to sleep past my usual waking hour, and then to be aroused by the telephone-bell, to make me feel something extraordinary had occurred the night before, even before I was awake enough to recall the awful details. I still was confused when I heard Jacob Pell's voice at the other end of the wire; but I could discern the tremor in it, wholly unusual in a man of his firm, authoritative, rather phlegmatic sort. He begged me to come in all haste and to keep silence until he could inform me privately and fully of a catastrophe. Then he gave me the address of the house to which I was to hasten, and rang off. The address brought all the incidents vividly to my mind. For, as was to be expected, it was the number of the house at whose entrance the white, trembling girl and I had left our lifeless burden.

Jacob evidently had given orders, for when I reached the Van Buren house, a man-servant, immediately upon ascertaining that I was the expected Dr. Mason, led me to a study on the second floor. I was relieved to find none of the bereaved family there. I do not think I could have faced out that. Pell was pacing the floor in repressed agitation and obvious thought.

"Henry, old man," he said, coming forward and grasping my hand firmly, "I knew I could depend upon you."

The words and the tone of complete confidence made me wince. I comforted myself with the reminder that at any time it seemed necessary or best, I could reveal what I knew. Jacob explained hastily and succinctly that a servant, opening the house for the morning, had found Carrington Van Buren dead in the vestibule. He and his family, and his closer business associates, had known that his heart was weak. And Jacob suggested with

slight reservation that the situation at the bank had been a grave strain on the president and himself. He went on to tell that Van Buren, returning, although perhaps not directly, from a special meeting of directors, had expired when at the very point of unlocking the inner door to his home. There seemed no reason to doubt the cause of his death; there were no signs of violence of any sort, nor had he been robbed, either of money or of papers, some of great importance, which he carried.

This much Jacob told me to preface a request that I make an examination of the body before the coroner was called, to ascertain definitely that the death was from natural causes. He would explain his reasons for this more fully, he said, as we drove down to Wall street, whence he urgently requested me to attend him. To face again the specter of the night before, I fortified myself with all of my professional manner and knowledge. And I cannot deny a feeling of relieving reassurance when I convinced myself again of the innocence of the death.

The brougham hardly had started on its trip to Wall street when Pell broke the silence he had maintained since my diagnosis of his late co-worker's death.

"I must explain this whole matter to you," he said. "I must bare the most confidential facts so that you can understand. Of course grief and agitation over so sudden a death of an old friend, and older and closer business associate, is natural. That needs no explanation. But there is much more beneath this. I have reason to fear that I am confronted with a calamity. But I shall fight it; and, if I can, alone."

He was silent for a moment, gazing out of the brougham windows at the crush of vehicles and of scurrying people that already swarmed in the streets.

"As I have intimated to you already this morning," he went on, "the New Netherlands is fighting its way through a crisis. But you knew something of that some weeks ago, when I went to

pull our Albany and Buffalo branches into shape."

"And worry over this, you think, killed Van Buren?" I asked, though the element of deception in the question made it choke in my throat.

"I only hope that was all," the vice-president answered. "I only hope that the bank itself is all that I shall have to preserve."

"You mean?"

"I can pull that through. My money can go, if the worst comes. Although," he added, with less firmness in his tone, "we need it ourselves more than ever now—for Dick. There is a girl—I have not seen her yet; but Martha finds her sweet and good—"

My conscience would not let me listen to this. "About Van Buren?" I prompted.

"I don't know yet how ingenuous he may have been," was the answer. Suddenly Jacob lifted his voice angrily and defiantly, as though I had questioned the dead president's probity. "It was ingenuousness at worst, you understand. No one shall question his honor."

"Who should?" I asked, more because I felt something should be said than because I thought highly of the question.

"That is what I must explain to you," Pell went on. "And why I must investigate the bank's affairs—certain affairs—before even the directors know of Van Buren's death. Of course you did not think I hastened back from Albany because of this death?"

"I hardly had thought," I confessed. "Naturally, though, there would not have been time."

"I came because of a long-distance telephone talk with the dead man himself," Pell went on. "Van Buren was in a hole—he himself could not estimate how deep. Presently we shall find out. In the bank's stress, you understand, we called in every available loan—every available loan but one. And that one was the largest to an individual. That was called three days ago. Finally, yesterday, the woman con-

fessed she could not pay above an immaterial fraction of it."

"But the security?" I asked. "Surely a large loan—the largest to an individual, you say—surely the security was sound?"

"That's it, Henry," burst forth the man beside me. "Van Buren, who negotiated the loan personally and solely on his own authority, never saw the security."

I was amazed. Pell doubtless discerned what my exclamation would have been.

"It may be good," he said; "I do not know. We only can hope. But Van Buren confessed to me, over the long-distance wire last evening, that he never had opened the package of securities deposited with him by Mrs. Deverill."

"Mrs. Deverill!" I gasped.

"Even you know of her," he commented, but with a little surprise in his tone.

"One need not be 'of' the financial world to have heard the resounding echoes of Mrs. Deverill's bewildering manipulations." I tried to give a lightness to our grave conversation. "'He who runs may read' of her. 'The Sorceress of Finance,' isn't that the yellow journal sobriquet for her?"

"And the foundation of it all," came in slow, bitter tones from Pell, "was money she had borrowed from the New Netherlands Trust on those securities that none of us ever has seen."

Even an old mole as remote from all knowledge of high finance as I could grasp something of the enormity of this situation.

"I can't believe it," I gasped. "What reason could there have been for trusting a stranger—virtually she was a stranger to you, I presume?"

"To me still. I never have seen her. The transaction was carried on by the president personally, and beneath a veil of much mystery. She came to him with a letter of introduction from the pastor of a leading church in Detroit; Saint Something-or-other—the one the newspapers call James H. Rutgers's church, because the old billion-

aire goes there Sundays to bargain for his black soul in the next world. The backing seemed substantial. But, of course, Van Buren did not depend solely on that. He had her life in Detroit looked up. She was acquainted among the best people of the city, and lived and entertained expensively and with taste, though with neither extravagance nor display. Her origin was difficult to trace; but she appeared to be a woman of wealth and, clearly, of education and refinement."

"But, but," I queried, now wholly oblivious to everything but the extraordinary revelations being made to me, "certainly a bank president does not loan thousands of dollars to any woman who attends James H. Rutgers's church and appears 'to be a woman of wealth'—with or without refinement."

"That is it," replied Pell. "That is where the hope comes in, the expectation, I may say, that we are agitating ourselves needlessly. For Mrs. Deverill gave convincing reason for the mystery of her origin, and for the secrecy of the transaction. She told Van Buren—and showed corroborative signatures—that the securities came from old Heber Draycott."

"Draycott—Draycott of the Denver & Southwestern?" I gasped. I barely found breath to add: "But why?"

I felt like Alice in Wonderland. Each revelation, introducing into Jacob's story, as it did, a new name of some king of American finance, added to my bewilderment. So utterly dazed and dazzled was I that I had not observed the stopping of the carriage before the imposing entrance of the Trust Company of New Netherlands Building, on the south side and beyond the bend in Wall street. "But why?" I gasped again, wondering if there could be any answer that would startle me after the astounding narrative I had heard. Yet there was one. For as Jacob Pell stepped from the brougham he whispered, over his shoulder:

"She assured Van Buren that she was old Draycott's illegitimate daughter."

III

WE were in poor old Van Buren's private office at last, and the door locked behind us. My own relief made me understand something of what Pell must have felt when we found no signs of unusual confusion or excitement about the bank, inside or out. The fact that the president lay dead was, obviously, unknown. What would the effect be when the news came out? The president's confidential clerk, whom I recognized as a friend of Dick Pell's, did seem, as a matter of fact, somewhat flurried. But this was due, he made known, to the persistency of a young woman who had been at the doors of the bank some time before opening hour, insisting upon seeing the vice-president. Jacob, however, brushed the matter aside, with a little more show of his anxiety than I thought prudent, too. Even so, the clerk hesitated before dropping the subject. Seeing this, Pell suggested that his son see the woman; but Dick, it appeared, had not yet arrived at the bank. The woman must wait, then; that was all. And Pell and I went into the president's sanctum, and locked the door behind us.

I felt a sort of horror creep over me to stand thus in the private office of the dead man, knowing what I did, and above all fearing what I might be about to learn. For Pell had lost no time in kneeling before Van Buren's private safe and working out the intricate combination of the lock. Suddenly the great iron door swung open. Jacob Pell, his hand shaking, fumbled among many large, impressive papers. Presently he drew forth a bulky bundle of legal-looking documents.

"Annie F. Deverill," he read aloud, though to himself, with no evident thought of me. He clipped the string that bound the papers. I could feel my heart thump as though my very life depended upon the discovery. The vice-president hurried through the documents one after another, and as he did so I seemed to see his heavy, wrinkled face grow whiter and yet

whiter. When he had glanced at the last, he threw them down on the desk of the dead president.

"Blank," he said; "blank papers, every one!"

I did not know what to say. Nothing I could think of seemed adequate. I moved over to the large blank sheets and fingered them, as though something might be gained by that. Pell had dropped into a big chair, his head resting in his hand. I continued to turn the bogus documents over and over. Slowly, vaguely, I seemed to be wafted back to the desk I had stood beside in the dark, early hours of the morning, and to the paper I had handled while the dead president of the Trust Company sat in a large chair beside me with his head bowed, as the living president now sat. Then I realized that it was an odor that had carried my senses back, the strange, Oriental perfume of the missing letter. I lifted a sheet of the blank paper to my nose. That was it! The woman whose revelations had shocked Van Buren to his death, whose shadow I had seen fleeing in terror from the silent house, was the same who had placed these bogus documents in the safe of the Trust Company of New Netherlands.

There was a knock at the door. The clerk, humbly begging Pell's pardon, again asked if he would not see the persistent young lady. Then he added: "She says she comes on urgent business from Mrs. Deverill, and brings a note from Mr. Van Buren."

Pell and I looked in wonderment at each other.

"Walked into the net herself," he exclaimed.

"Hush," I warned; "the confidence in the bank above all else. There must be no scandal." And some stray remnant of sentiment in my wrinkled heart whispered, "There may be something bigger, more human still, to save."

"Show her in," I ordered, surprised at my own effrontery. I turned hastily to the litter of white paper. Gathering up the sheets, I restored

them to their original form and then shoved the package back into the open safe. Pell gazed at me in dull dismay. "That's all right," I murmured, answering the look. "You've got your woman—or easily can lay hands on her. But there is something else to ascertain. Are there one or two of them? And if there is a second, isn't she, perhaps, innocent? Isn't she, perhaps, worthy—?"

I opened the door and the clerk announced: "Miss Aines."

I glanced quickly at Pell. In his financial anxiety the name had not conveyed to him what I feared. But if Jacob was preoccupied, the girl was keen with nervous sensibility. She threw me one quick, sharp look. Then she drew herself firmly together. Neither of us indicated recognition.

"Which—which is vice-president of the bank?" she asked. I did not betray her. I was playing for greater odds.

"This gentleman," I answered, indicating Jacob. "I am Dr. Mason; but am confidentially acquainted with the bank's affairs." She shot another look at me.

"I have come from Mrs. Deverill," she went on, addressing Jacob. "She has some stocks—bonds—something, I do not understand these things, deposited here. And she wants them."

Pell's rage seemed about to relieve itself in, at least, a sneer. I interposed.

"Of course," I said in plausible, even tones, "you hardly expect us to hand over valuable papers to the first young woman who comes and asks for them?"

"Naturally, I brought an order." She addressed the reply to Pell.

"From Mrs. Deverill?" he sneered.

"And one from the president of the bank," she answered. Pell half rose in his surprise; I suppose if I had been a better actor I would have imitated him.

He scrutinized the two papers she handed him. "From him," he affirmed, looking at me. "Written last night."

I hardly was thinking of the bank now. Had I been duped by this

young woman? Was it treachery to Dick to even hope she might be worthy of him?

"Where did you get this?" I heard Pell say.

"Mrs. Deverill," she answered.

"Why did she not come herself?"

"She is not well. I offered."

"Who are you?"

"A—a friend," she stuttered.

Pell almost leered at her. But I was engrossed in a different scheme. I turned to the safe and drew forth four packages, the Deverill bundle and three of similar appearance. I threw them on the table before her.

"Which one is it you want?" I asked.

"I don't know," she answered, after a moment of uncertainty, and in evident dismay. My stodgy old heart gave a great leap. I believed I had proved my point. "Can't you tell? Doesn't the note say?" she asked in increasing agitation: "I know nothing about it myself."

"You lie!" cried Jacob Pell, starting from his chair and darting toward her. "You are the Deverill swindler herself—or her accomplice!"

The girl fell back in horror. I could see that her lips were repeating the word "swindler" in mental wonderment. Pell pressed his finger on an electric bell.

"The law will deal with you," he said.

I could hear the bell for the clerk. Then the door opened. But it was Dick Pell who entered. He started smilingly to greet his father. Then he saw the girl.

"Stella," he exclaimed, turning affectionately toward her; "why did you introduce yourself to father without me?"

"You know this woman?" the elder Pell gasped.

"Stella Aines," said Dick, "the girl I am going to marry."

"A swindler!" Jacob cried. "She has ruined Carrington Van Buren. And it will be ruin to us to save this bank from collapsing through her criminal duplicity. But she'll pay, she'll pay in jail to the end of her days!"

Just what the maddened boy cried out to his father, I do not know. Under cover of his loud and angry words, the girl came close to me.

"You've saved us—me—once," she whispered, "do it once again. This note—" she had scribbled a few words on a bit of paper—"hasten it to her. For God's sake, do this!"

Then she stepped back lest the father and son observe her whispered words to me.

"You may not be the Deverill woman," Pell said. "My son seems able to more or less prove that."

Then Dick burst in with something, but I did not hear. I was deliberately reading Miss Aines's note. If I could send it without injury to my friends, I would. "Flee," it said, "and hide, if the bank's charges are true." I glanced up. The men were in heated argument. There was only a moment to decide. The girl's haggard, distraught face, and her great, innocent, appealing eyes were turned toward me. Old fool, perhaps, but as God's in heaven, I believed her innocent. I slipped out of the door and gave the note to a bank messenger, with directions to deliver it with all speed. I looked at the address. It was to Mrs. Deverill.

When I returned, Jacob was just interrupting a volley of vituperative protest from his son.

"If this woman is not Mrs. Deverill—or her accomplice—she can and will prove her innocence by leading us to that criminal." His voice was raised; I closed the door. "I want none but the guilty punished. But by God, she shall rot in jail for this."

The girl looked from face to face as though pleading for a denial. But none could give it her. Then she threw back her head with a great sweep of defiance; but, sentimentalist that I suppose I had become, I saw heroism in it.

"I give in, then. You're right," she said. "I am Mrs. Deverill."

"Stella, what do you mean?" cried Dick.

"It is true," she declared. "This man can tell you that I've cheated you

all." She pointed to me. The two men turned in astonishment.

"Remember, it will be easy to identify you," I said. "You must be known to many."

"Not to so many," put in Pell. "But her record is, now, to us."

"Why," the boy cried, "she's only a girl—you can see that. This Mrs. Deverill—she must be years older, at very least."

"I am she, though," she protested. "Dr. Mason can tell you the incriminating way he met me last night, that the president of this bank expired in my apartment from the shock of something I told him!"

"What was it you told him?" I threw sharply at her, totally disregarding the consternation of the other men.

"I—I can't say," she stuttered. Then, as though to cover the discrepancy, she went on: "That order—he wrote it for me. He died as he signed his name."

"You were not in the room!" I threw at her again.

"I was. I lied to you."

"Of all this, later," Jacob interrupted. "It is only some new dodge in the swindle. Why, we've traced minor financial deals of Annie Deverill's back ten years or more. You can't possibly be she."

"I am! I tell you I am!" She was fairly screaming. But there was a pitiful note of appeal in her voice. She turned to me. "For God's sake, sir, make them believe me!"

"It's a blind," cried the vice-president, rising from his chair. "I see it! You are doing this to gain time for the Deverill woman's escape. The police shall deal with you, too."

As he rushed toward the door, the girl, flinging herself on her knees, held him back.

"Tell them I'm Mrs. Deverill," she moaned; "tell them I'm Mrs. Deverill!"

He was about to throw her off when the door burst open. A woman appeared. She slammed the door closed and stood with her back against it.

"I am Mrs. Deverill," she said in a controlled, authoritative voice.

The girl on the floor sank back aghast.

"My note? You didn't get it?" she gasped.

"We're getting at it now," said Pell. Dick had moved toward Miss Aines, but he seemed afraid to intrude upon her misery.

"I am Mrs. Deverill," the woman against the door repeated.

"You have come," I said, as casually as I could, in face of the disorder of the scene, "for these?" I held the package of securities toward her. For a moment I thought I saw a flash of greedy hope in her eyes. Then there was only determination and strength: determination to meet whatever was to come, and strength to grapple with it.

"And this?" I added, holding forth the note that the president had signed as he passed away. Then, seizing her gloved hands, I bent over them and inhaled the now familiar perfume.

"You leave this room a prisoner of the law," thundered Pell, bringing his fist down hard on the desk.

"I knew that when I came," she replied. "Oh, I can be game! I am Annie Deverill," she went on. "And that girl knows nothing of my money or of the source of it. It is to tell that to you, the father of Dick Pell, that I speeded here, of all places, when her note gave me the warning and the time to fly."

The girl, still limp on the floor, was sobbing. And it did my soft old heart good to see that Dick's arms were about her.

"I have not come here to plead, or to ask for mercy, or to excuse myself for the way I've lived. I haven't found much pity in the world. I've had to fight it, every inch. And I've fought with any and every weapon I could find. I battled for that girl there—my daughter."

There was no note of appeal or of regret in Mrs. Deverill's voice. It was firm and big and strong.

"I fought for her—so that she would

not have to struggle with the sacrifices and temptations and embittering envy of poverty as I did. She could not have borne it. I don't know whether what I did was right or wrong. And I don't care. I didn't do it for myself. When she was just beginning to grow to the age when I most wanted her I sent her away from me. She did not even know my name. She should not be contaminated by me; nor should she be disillusionized. She was reared in comfort, and with good people. And she was to marry a clean, honest boy—who was not one jot too good for her."

For the first time the woman's voice lost something of its strength and firmness.

"And it is to make sure that all that won't go for nothing that I am here now. 'Cause you've just got to know that my girl is innocent of all this. Until last night she never even suspected it. Then I was a coward. But I won't be again. When I saw the game was up, saw a prison closing around me, I lost my nerve. I arranged a secret meeting with Van Buren—at her apartment where I had had her kept away from me; that assured privacy. She knew nothing of the matter. She was not even in the room when I made the situation clear to Van Buren, in all its ghastly nakedness. And when he saw that my ruin was his, too, and the bank's, his heart gave out. Then, God forgive me—I ran away!"

There was something tremendous in the remorse of that cry. Then, suddenly, she said:

"But I'll be game now. My girl's life sha'n't be ruined by years of public shame and misery, near the shadow of a prison."

Before I could realize her words, the woman had drawn a revolver from her breast, and had fired three times upward in her mouth. As I rushed to give the trained aid that I knew was useless, I could not help but feel glad to see that the girl had fainted. And Dick's arms were wrapped close about her.



THE CLAIMS OF FRIENDSHIP

By Elliott Flower

DAN HAWLEY played with the recklessness of a man who could afford to lose, but even a man to whom the money means little may have a tense interest in the game. So Dan Hawley was irritable when Joe Norris interrupted with a whispered caution.

"You're going it too strong, old man," said Norris.

"It's my money, ain't it?" retorted Hawley.

"Of course, but—"

"Well, you go back and sit down. I don't need any guardian."

Norris made no further protest. As a matter of fact, Norris was in no position to read a lecture on gambling, for he had "gone broke" a little while before. It was no new experience for either of them: they played often, with varying fortune, and they certainly left with empty pockets quite as often as with overflowing ones. But they were not "plungers," lacking the cash rather than the disposition for heavy play. Fifty dollars was usually the limit of loss for either of them, and one hundred dollars the limit of gain—that is, it was seldom that either had more than fifty dollars to lose, and they modestly determined to be satisfied with one hundred dollars' profit.

Occasionally one of them got the profit; more frequently both of them stood the loss. All rules being elastic and affected by prevailing conditions, it sometimes happened that one of them had more than fifty dollars, and so lost more; and it also happened—rarely—that one of them pushed his winnings beyond the limit set. From this it will be seen that they were not professional

gamblers, although reasonably regular patrons of the "house."

The "fever," however, is not easily controlled. Norris had stopped with a forty-dollar loss, because that was all the money he had; Hawley had lost more than two hundred dollars and was still playing. That was because Hawley had it to lose—not that he could afford to lose it, but he had an unusual supply of cash. Norris probably would have done the same thing in the same circumstances, but, having lost his little all, he was able to see that Hawley was acting foolishly. For a loss of forty or fifty dollars there was the sanction of precedent, but this was becoming wasteful; it was "too much like gambling," as Norris whimsically expressed it. There could be justification for it only when a man was "playing on velvet"—risking his previous winnings—and Norris and Hawley spent their occasional winnings so freely and promptly that they seldom had any to risk. But Hawley was now dissipating his third hundred.

Twice Norris had tried to break the "fever" by a friendly reminder of the foolishness of it, and each time he had received a curt reply. Then he sat down, with a high-ball and a cigar, to await the pleasure of his unwise friend.

At three hundred and fifty dollars the spell was broken. Hawley rose, stretched himself and called for a drink.

"I'm all in," he announced carelessly.

"Such a foolishness," commented Norris. "That must have been real money."

"Sure," admitted Hawley.

Gambling profits were "easy" money, all else was "real" money, and it was an unheard-of thing that any considerable sum of "real" money should be allowed to accumulate in the pockets of either.

"Too much," said Norris.

"Sure," Hawley agreed. "I told you I didn't want to come up tonight, but you were bound to have me come along and watch you lose your own little wad." There was nothing of reproach or complaint in this; Hawley had no disposition to blame anyone else for his own weaknesses, and he mentioned it merely as an interesting fact that had some bearing on the situation. "I held back ten," he added, "so we can still eat, drink and be merry within reason. Come on."

He disposed of his drink and led the way to the street.

"You didn't have to play," argued Norris defensively, as they walked along.

"How foolish you talk," retorted Hawley lightly. "You and I always have to play when we can; our only hope is to stay where we can't. But I really thought I wouldn't, this time. Did you ever have that kind of a think?"

Norris had to admit, with a laugh, that the experience was not wholly unknown to him. "But I didn't know you had so much," he explained. "Where'd you get it?"

"The fairies brought it to me," laughed Hawley; "at least, they dropped three hundred into my lap, and I had the rest. Do you believe in fairies?"

"Well, I don't believe in them enough to expect any presents," was the smiling rejoinder; "but," he added seriously, "I feel sort of guilty, Dan. That's too much to lose."

"Anything is too much to lose," returned Hawley sagely. "I don't remember that I ever had anything that I could afford to pass out to the gamblers—really afford to give them."

"Oh, well—" Norris was somewhat staggered by this prosaic and sensible view, coming from such a source, and he was at a loss for a reply to it.

"But I'm of age," Hawley went on; "I don't need a guardian. Perhaps I need one," he corrected, "but I don't want one. If I make a fool of myself that's my own business, and I don't expect anybody else to load his conscience up with it. I don't see how I can blame you, Joe, when I walk into a gambling-house on my own two feet and put up my money with my own hands. Let's go in here."

They entered a restaurant and sought a table in a secluded corner. That they were well and favorably known there was evident from the promptness with which a waiter placed himself at their service and mentioned the usual preliminary cocktail inquiringly.

"Bring 'em along," ordered Hawley, "and we'll be looking over the bill-of-fare. I've got a ten-dollar bill, George," he added, whimsically, "so you put a stop-order on us at \$9.50 or you won't get any tip. Joe is broke, and that's my limit."

"Oh, I might scare up enough for the tip and carfare," interposed Norris.

"Then you may make the stop-order ten dollars even," said Hawley, with a face so inscrutable that the waiter repressed an inclination to smile. Ten dollars would far more than cover all that they usually ordered, but Hawley now placed the bill under a glass as a gentle reminder of the limit. "Keep your eye on it, George," he instructed. "The house is stuck for anything you serve in excess of that, but Joe is good for the tip."

The waiter went after the cocktails, and incidentally informed the bartender that "that Hawley is a queer guy, and he's certainly got his kidding clothes on tonight." But there were indications that it was not all "kidding," for Hawley gravely insisted upon the waiter figuring up the bill from time to time and informing him how much there was left of the ten dollars.

"You'd better save out a little," advised Norris. "A few dollars may come in handy."

"What's a few dollars?" returned Hawley plaintively. "Why, the whole ten-dollar bill wouldn't even make the

landlady look pleasant. The three hundred might have done some good, but ten is no better than a nickel."

"Who was the fairy?" asked Norris, returning to the feature that most mystified him.

"Uncle John," replied Hawley.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Norris. "I thought he was closer than a clam."

"He is," said Hawley. "You have to take Uncle John just right, to do anything with him. You see, he's business from the ground up, and he has some sort of a foolish idea that a man should live within his income—considerably within it, no matter how small it may be. I never have managed to hit it off exactly right with Uncle John, because he thinks I want to spend what other people save. Of course, if people will save, there's got to be somebody to put the money in circulation, so I fit into the general scheme of things quite properly, but Uncle John never could see it that way." Hawley paused long enough to get to the bottom of his glass, put in another order, and light a fresh cigar. "Well, things were getting so serious with me," he went on dreamily, as if the matter were one in which he had no great personal interest, "that I wrote to Uncle John about it. I told him I needed some clothes, which is true; that I was behind with my board-bill, which is true; that I was in debt for trifling accommodations to various others, which is true. You see, I was quite honest with him, and I suppose that surprised him."

"So he gave you the money," said Norris.

"Oh, it wasn't exactly a gift," explained Hawley. "I told him I was in desperate need of three hundred dollars, and he asked me if I would sell my chances under his will for that sum."

"You're a fool!" declared Norris emphatically. "He's worth all kinds of money."

"I told him," pursued Hawley calmly, "that three hundred dollars now was a certainty, whereas there was always something distressingly uncertain about money that was coming at the death of

a living person: he might outlive me or he might go broke or he might change his mind and his will. In brief, I assured him that I was prepared to take the cash and call it square."

"You're a fool!" repeated Norris.

"I've been wondering about that," said Hawley reflectively. "Of course, if I managed to keep in the will, and he died first, I'd come in for a pretty big bunch of money; but these people who don't do anything but make money and take care of themselves have a way of living long, and he doesn't like my ways very well, either. There were three chances: that he'd go broke or I'd die first or he'd cut me out of the will. The last was a big chance, for he has already said some very unkind things about my mode of life. I guess it's a fair bet that I did the wise thing. Anyhow, I needed the money."

"And what good did it do you?" demanded Norris.

"None at all, thanks to your friendly desire for my companionship," replied Hawley. "I had a little fun—at least, I suppose I had a little fun—yes, there must be fun in gambling or we wouldn't invest in it so regularly—but I haven't done any of the things I expected to do. I've got to frame up a new story for the landlady between now and morning."

"You're a fool!" said Norris for the third time.

"It's quite possible," agreed Hawley cheerfully.

"I'm not talking about tonight's business, although that's bad enough," explained Norris, "but you're a fool to gamble at all."

"Of course," returned Hawley. "So are you."

"It isn't quite so bad in my case," argued Norris; "I'm sacrificing no gilt-edge prospects, but look what it's done to you! If it hadn't been for gambling, you wouldn't have needed the three hundred, and you wouldn't have had to sacrifice the future. It's the 'tiger' that's beat you out of the big money that was coming to you."

"Oh, no," said Hawley, apparently more interested in the abstract propo-

sition than in the personal application of it; "I did it with my own little bump of folly. It isn't fair to blame the 'tiger' for everything indiscriminately. The 'tiger' didn't come to me; I went to the 'tiger.' He didn't reach down into my pockets for the money; I pulled it out and handed it over to him. Any way you look at it, Joe, I'm the responsible party or else I'm a doodle that ought not to be at liberty. I prefer to believe that I'm responsible, and I pay the cost of my amusement with as much cheerfulness as the circumstances will permit."

"After the 'tiger' had compelled you to sell your prospects for three hundred," persisted Norris, "he even took away the three hundred."

"I gave it to him," corrected Hawley. "It annoyed me to have the care of it, so I gave it to him. I wish you wouldn't try to preach, Joe. You know very well that you're just as big a fool as I am, or else I'd be borrowing enough from you to put the landlady in good humor. You ought not to pass money over to the 'tiger' in such a reckless way, Joe, when your friends are likely to need it."

"There's no blooming fortune for me to throw away," retorted Norris.

"Nor for me, now," said Hawley. "It's quite a relief not to have that on my mind."

While Norris could see the folly of it all, he also could understand and appreciate Hawley's point of view, and he rather admired the philosophy with which the latter accepted the penalty of his own acts. Many in his position would have been morose and bitter, but Hawley was whimsically cheerful and did not even make any absurd resolves never to do it again; it was part of the game to be a good loser.

"Of course," Hawley went on idly, "it's going to be rather hard to explain to the landlady. I've been paying her a little something from time to time, but somehow I never managed to get home with much money in my pockets, and there's about eighty dollars due her now. You know how that is?"

"I'm some behind with mine," admitted Norris.

"But you didn't promise it for tonight," said Hawley. "I'll have to dodge her tomorrow, and it's Sunday, too. She may levy on my trunk." He seemed to find amusement in the thought. "I was just thinking," he explained, "that it's a good thing I didn't get the new clothes I thought I needed, or I might lose them with the trunk. But I hate to give up those clothes; I'm beginning to look shabby. Then there's about a hundred in debts that I wanted to clean up. I figured that I could get a clean slate, and still have quite a bit left for emergencies. But it's my funeral—I don't expect any other mourners, except the landlady, and she'll get what's coming to her in time." He turned to the waiter. "What's left of the ten, George?"

"Sixty cents, sir," was the reply.

"Bring us two twenty-five cent cigars and keep the dime," Hawley instructed. "Joe, dig up a half for George, and we'll take our troubles home with us. I've got Uncle John off my mind, anyhow, and he was a ripping old burden."

Ten dollars, judiciously invested, will purchase enough of food and drink to make two men reasonably contented, if not hilariously happy, and it may be chronicled that Hawley and Norris parted in most excellent humor. Hawley even whistled joyously as he approached his boarding-house. Mrs. Collins always retired early and surely she would not appear in her nightdress, at 1 A.M., to demand the money he had promised, so he had nothing to worry about until morning, and, as he could sleep late, morning for him was too far in the future to be worthy of serious thought.

Nor was his sleep troubled. Indeed, possibly because of his liberal potations, he had no dreams at all, and he awoke without a headache or any of that feeling of depression that is popularly supposed to follow an evening devoted to the allurements of gambling and intoxicants. There was, in fact, something of grim humor in the view

he took of the situation. He could tell Mrs. Collins a nice, cheerful lie that would keep her inactive for a few days; his other creditors would have to continue to wait, and he could worry along without the clothes. It was rather amusing to contemplate how competently "broke" he was. He had been on the road to this condition for a long time, and he certainly had reached his destination. He had not even breakfast money, and it was too late to get breakfast in the house.

"It's some satisfaction," he mused, "to know that I've reached the limit. I can't lose anything more until next pay-day; I can't even borrow anything to lose. I guess I'd better quit. I've got to make one more winning to pull me out of the hole, and then I'll quit for good." Then he laughed. "Quit!" he repeated. "How foolish I talk! I wasn't going to play last night, but I played. I guess it's in the blood. But I'll pay off the next time I win, if I have to hire somebody to tie me up and carry me home before I can blow in the money. That's what I'll do."

He rose and dressed himself leisurely, incidentally searching his clothes for any loose change that he might have overlooked the previous night. To his surprise, he found three dimes. Very likely Norris had contributed this tremendous sum, so that he might have coffee, rolls and car-fare in the morning. Anyhow, it was not now necessary for him to go hungry until dinner, and it occurred to him that thirty cents was not entitled to the scornful treatment it received in the slang of the day.

Mrs. Collins intercepted him at the door as he was going out.

"I looked for you last evening," she said significantly.

"Awfully sorry, Mrs. Collins," he returned, unloading his prepared lie with an apparent sincerity that was quite convincing, "but the letter did not come. I presume I'll get it tomorrow or next day."

"I'm getting sort of tired of promises," she declared.

"I don't blame you," he said frankly, "but I assure you my uncle promised

me three hundred dollars. He is sometimes a little dilatory, but I do not see how the cheque can fail to reach me this week. A very little more time will bring me out all right. You don't know how it troubles me to have disappointed you, but surely it is better to wait a few days and get the money than it is to go to extremes."

"I'll give you one more week," she decided doubtfully. "I ought not to do it, but I'll do it. Then, if you don't pay up, I'll take action that you won't like."

This threat did not disturb Hawley in the least. He knew that Mrs. Collins's impatience was justified, and he cheerfully forgave her for any unpleasant words she might use. Indeed, his mind was principally occupied with the reflection that one more week would give him one more pay-day, and one more pay-day would enable him to make a sufficient payment to avert her wrath and make her hopeful of full payment later. This made the future look so bright that he could see no reason for gloom.

"By the way, Mr. Hawley," Mrs. Collins added, as he was departing, "a young man who gave his name as Ray Borden called to see you last evening. He seemed awfully disappointed not to find you in."

Hawley stopped with a suddenness that indicated a distinct shock. An exclamation of dismay, more forceful than polite, rose to his lips, but he smothered it.

"Did he leave any message?" he asked.

"He said he'd call again today."

"I forgot him," said Hawley slowly and with evident distress; "I clean forgot him." He lingered uncertainly. "If he comes back before I get home, Mrs. Collins," he went on finally, "tell him it's all right, and I'll look him up later. Please be sure, Mrs. Collins; it's quite important. Tell him it's all right, and I'll look him up later—just to wait for me at home."

The need of breakfast was forgotten when Hawley reached the street; he had another problem on his mind.

"I clean forgot him," he kept saying to himself; "I promised him a hundred of that Uncle John money, and I clean forgot him. Ray Borden, too—one of the whitest men and best friends that ever lived! And he needs the money; he's trying to put a sister through college, and he's up against it."

It may be said for Dan Hawley that what he considered the limit in his own case was in no sense the limit for a friend; he had despaired of improving his own condition before another pay-day, but this was quite another matter. Borden needed the money for his sister, and he needed it right away. Further—and this was the really important point—Hawley had promised to let him have it. Borden was relying on that promise. Obligations to creditors did not trouble Hawley much, but the obligations of friendship were sacred, and to "throw down" a friend was the next thing to murder in his category of crime. To keep faith with Borden, in the latter's extremity of need, was a matter of honor; wherefore Hawley had left word that it was "all right."

But where was he to get one hundred dollars? He had considered every possibility in his own case and had failed to find anything that offered the slightest promise. His gambling propensities were known, and one man, who had known his father, had curtly informed him that he never loaned money for gambling purposes. His employer had recently refused to make a salary advance for the same reason. The few people from whom he could borrow had little, and he already owed them as much as they could afford to spare. All this had failed to make any effect upon his cheerful optimism before, but now it troubled him. There was no one to whom he could turn, and he had to have the money.

"I might try Carey," he reflected.

Carey was the keeper of the gambling-house that he visited with some regularity. Carey unquestionably knew him, for he usually gave him a

nod of recognition, and they occasionally exchanged a word or two, but there was no intimacy that would really warrant such an application as this. Still, gamblers had the reputation of being liberal with other gamblers in hard luck.

"I will try Carey," he decided.

He went to Carey's home. It was a desperate chance—a chance that he never would have thought of taking for himself—but the plan that he slowly evolved seemed to offer some hope. Carey would have to help him out; it was a "case of must," and he would make Carey understand it. His determination and his desperation increased with each passing moment; it was an absolute necessity that he should get that money, by fair means or foul, and Carey would have to furnish it.

Carey was plainly surprised and not at all pleased by the call. He tried to keep his "business" away from his home, but Hawley insisted upon the importance of his mission, and was admitted.

"Well, what is it?" asked Carey.

"I want a hundred dollars," said Hawley bluntly.

"On a dead card, my son," returned Carey promptly. "I'm no loan broker."

"I've got to have it," insisted Hawley, and an observing man would have seen that, although he spoke calmly, he was dreadfully in earnest.

"They all have," remarked Carey. "Everybody's always got to have it when he asks for it."

"I lost three hundred and fifty to you last night," argued Hawley.

"But you lost it, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"There wasn't anything crooked, was there?"

"Not so far as I know. I certainly make no such charge."

"Well, that's gambling, isn't it?" said Carey cynically.

"Yes, that's gambling."

"I didn't drug you, did I?"

"No."

"I didn't send for you or invite you or do anything to get you, did I?"

"No."

"Well, I don't see that you've got any kick coming."

"I haven't," admitted Hawley, "but I've got to have a hundred today."

"Guess again," said Carey, with an unpleasant laugh. "I'd make a big hit paying back the losses of everybody who went against my game, wouldn't I?"

"I don't want you to pay back anything," explained Hawley, repressing an inclination to speak with explosive earnestness; "I want to borrow a hundred."

"Sure," was Carey's sarcastic retort; "get a hundred from me and play my own money against my own bank! Not any."

"I don't intend to gamble with it," Hawley insisted patiently.

"But you will." Even the gambler who profited by his weakness held him in contempt for it, and Hawley was at last conscious of how much of a fool he appeared to others. It was galling and humiliating, but Hawley held to his plan and his purpose. "What do you think you want it for?" Carey added.

"It's a little matter of honor that you wouldn't understand."

"Oh, you've been losing some wind bets, and you want to make good."

"I said you wouldn't understand. It has nothing to do with gambling; but I've got to have the money, and I've got to have it from you."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because," and the glitter in Hawley's eyes now gave the gambler something of a start, "I think you'd rather lend me a hundred than be mugged up all over your own house. Now don't make any gun-play," as Carey instinctively reached for his pocket, "because I can get you first."

Carey, being in his own home, was without the revolver that he usually carried, but he had all the coolness and nerve of men of his class.

"What good would it do you?" he asked, a slight pallor being his only evidence of emotion.

"No good," answered Hawley, "but there would be satisfaction in it."

"And the noose," suggested Carey.

A smile, that merely showed passing appreciation of a joke without modifying the air of determination, flitted across Hawley's face.

"There seems to be a little misunderstanding," he said; "I have no thought of murder, but I certainly will mix up and misplace your features in a painful way, if I don't get that money. I can do it before any help comes. Isn't it worth a hundred to you to keep your face in order?"

"So that's your game, is it?" said Carey, to gain time.

"We have to do some disagreeable things for our friends sometimes," apologized Hawley. "This is one of them. I'm going to have that hundred or else I'm going to mix it up with you quick and sudden, and tomorrow I'll sue for gambling losses. I'll go after you in every way that I can."

"I thought you had some sporting blood in you," remarked Carey contemptuously.

Hawley winced. Every man likes to be considered "game" in all the affairs of life, and the suggestion of "a streak of yellow" is considered especially damning in those circles in which Hawley had been largely living.

"I pay for my own damn foolishness without grumbling," he said, "but—Well, there's no use trying to explain to you. Do I get that money now, or do you want to carry your face in a sling, get into the papers, and pay out more later? It's up to you, Carey, and you've got to be quick, for I mean business."

They studied each other for a minute in silence. Hawley read in the face of Carey contempt and anger, combined with a crafty consideration of all the chances; Carey saw in the face and attitude of Hawley determination and preparation, the younger man being ready for an instant spring. He was outwardly cool but tense, but his eyes reflected the excitement under which he was laboring.

"How much did you lose?" asked Carey at last.

"Three hundred and fifty, but—"

"I'll give you the money," said Carey, the bitterest contempt in his tone, "but we don't want your kind in the house. The lookout will be instructed to bar you, and, if you ever manage to sneak in, you'll be kicked out."

"I'll take a hundred—no more—as a loan," declared Hawley, his face flushing at the affront, "and I'll pay it back."

"Of course," sneered Carey, "but I don't want any dealings with you; I don't want your money at any stage of the game. I'll square up with you for last night, and that's the finish." He produced a big roll of bills, counted off three hundred and fifty dollars, and offered it to Hawley. The latter put one hundred dollars of the sum in his pocket, and tried to return the balance. "You can't buy your way back into the game that way," said Carey; "you're barred, so you might as well keep all of it."

"I'm through with your game and all games for good," asserted Hawley, still tendering the cash.

"I've heard that kind of talk before," said Carey; "the yellow man is always through when he loses. But you're certainly through with my game."

"I'm through with them all," repeated Hawley. "I'm no tin god, Carey—I'm just the ordinary brand of fool—but any game that can make me

throw down a friend is too tough for me. What I do to myself is all right, and I've got no kick coming, but the thing that grips me so that I forget a friend is too fierce a proposition for Dan Hawley. I've cut out gambling." He released his hold on the money he was tendering, and the bills fluttered to the floor. "I can't promise this hundred in a lump, but you'll get a little every week until it is all paid."

Carey heard the outer door close behind his caller before he made any movement. Then he picked up the scattered bills.

"He's a new kind," he reflected. "I never knew one of them to back away from any cash before. Perhaps he means it."

It was the careless Dan Hawley, so familiar to all his friends, that sought out Ray Borden and gave him the promised one hundred dollars.

"I hope it isn't going to inconvenience you very much," said Borden gratefully.

"Not at all, not at all," replied Hawley; "glad to let you have it. As a matter of fact, old man, I guess I'm getting more good out of this loan than you are. Now don't try to puzzle that out, for one man has already gone crazy trying to understand me, and I'm something of a mystery to myself."



THE SEA

By Archibald Sullivan

AT dawn, blue waved, it swiftly passed me by,
 White-crested caravan across the lea,
 Foam-flowered and sunlit laden with the day,
 Bound for the desert of eternity.

THE NIGHT OF THE EIGHTEENTH- NINETEENTH

By Anne Warner

IT was about ten o'clock upon the night of the eighteenth. The fire over there on the other side of the room was burning brightly. All around it spread an aurora borealis of dancing reflections, and across the gold points upon the ceiling and out upon the burnished polish of chair and table sprang such quivering flushes of warm response as the emblem and source of life can ever call from the inanimate, born of its bidding.

In front of the fire—a little to one side, perhaps—stood a single large chair—empty. It was a padded, cushioned chair, with wide, flat arm-pieces, each of which terminated in a carved lion-head.

At the opposite side of the library, well out of the light—indeed, in the darkest shadow of a huge bronze vase—sat Richard Barclay. That darkest shadow made by the towering bronze Nemesis was his favorite place of an evening. The figure rose high over his head and her sword swept down in his direction. But the menace of the symbol was no disquiet to him. On the contrary, to sit beneath the shadow of Nemesis and know that her sword is sharp and true may be a singular comfort to some of God's not-yet-perfected creatures. To contemplate Nemesis is not to put one's hand forth for the sword—Richard Barclay carried no imprint of such desire in his sad, quiet face. There may be a time of horrible stress in which man rushes forth with blood that is hot to kill, but let the wrong and the grief be deep enough and

the futility of human vengeance soon overcomes all human desire—"Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord, 'I will repay.'"

So Richard Barclay sat quiet in his library. He had sat thus for so many, many hours during the twenty years which had overlaid his buoyant youth with a premature and woeful age. He sat quite still, remaining as he often remained without moving for an hour at a time; tonight it had been all of two, for tonight was the night of heaviest memories—the night of the eighteenth. Heavy memories truly. Sitting there in the shadow—still and alone—he felt the cold drops start out from time to time upon his forehead as they rose fresh before him. The present was passing him by unnoticed; the past alone was present. Green harbor water swashed idly beside his chair, chains rattled and voices cried, up—far up on the hillside—the lights of the embassy fête gleamed through the embassy trees, and the moon hung overhead, watching—watching. O Moon of that night of twenty years ago, what couldst thou tell if tongue were but allowed to silence!

Upstairs the young rajah was saying good-bye. The young rajah had dined with them tonight. He had come to make his adieux—perhaps forever. The tidings of his father's death were now four days old; with the dawn he would take ship toward the throne that awaited him in the East. Richard Barclay had sat with his wife and his ward through dinner and then had come

away and left them to themselves. They were almost of the same age, those two, the blond, blooming girl—woman—rose, and the handsome alien into whose body and brain it had been proposed for diplomatic reasons to engraft the ideas and customs of another race and land. A slight sound above roused the man in the shadows out of himself at this instant and caused him to recall that dark, slender boy whom he had brought to England ten years before. During the long journey on ship-board his heart had been stirred to warmest pity for the poor, homesick child who, shorn of all his Oriental splendor, was to be cast forthwith into the chill atmosphere of an English public school.

One who was equally at home in East or West could guess at what the cold, mist-laden air of his native country might be going to be to that little prince from the warm, brown-bosomed Mother-East. He had been full of sympathy for the boy, had tried to be a real friend to his desolation, and when later the older had married and become master of a home—of several homes, in fact—he had thrown their doors all open to him who was now become a stripling with large dark eyes, dull red lips, lithe, god-like form. For the young prince was very, very handsome. He had come through all his ordeals bravely and had made many friends—none quite like his first, mayhap, but still, many friends. And now his father was dead and a throne awaited him, and on the morrow at six he was to embark, and this evening at ten—quarter-past ten now—he was upstairs making his adieux to Audrey. Richard Barclay, thinking of all this, thought further, with a sigh, that he must go presently and say a few parting words himself—just out of common courtesy. There had been none as he left the table—nothing that would answer—and something must of course be said. He would go presently. Presently.

And then he sat quiet again, his head thrown back against the back of the chair. A man of spare, nervous build—Richard Barclay. A man of high cheek-bones and hollow eyes. A man of lean,

sinewy hands—a man of curious, quiet, unfathomable expression—and oh, so sad! So inconsolably, irretrievably sad.

He turned himself in his chair, after a while, and sighed again.

"The night of the eighteenth," he murmured; "oh, the night of the eighteenth! The years pass me so slowly by and yet this night comes so rapidly again and again." Then he closed his eyes and felt himself yet once more softly lifted and lowered upon the blue-purple waves of that far-distant port, while the ship, resting from her battle with two oceans and three seas, slept at anchor. The sounds and cries of life kept blowing from the shore and high up on the hillside sparkled ever the myriad lights of the fête. He stood by the rail and watched those lights, knowing well that everyone present at the fête had been told that below there in the bay the ship lay at anchor; and that thought had helped him to wait patiently—to endure with something approximating patience—that last long night—that night of the eighteenth.

Soft-lapping harbor waves, green, purple and blue, did you ever rise and fall closer to utter happiness (and to utter grief) than upon that night? The stars were bright then—so was the moon. Did not all on sea and land measure their brilliancy to its full?—for who on sea or land could sleep that night, knowing that at any minute the word might come to go or come ashore?

Twenty years distant from it all the man in the dark of his great library lifted his hand and drew its back across his eyes, and a sound akin to pain repressed echoed in the room. Then he struck his palms sharply together, rose abruptly and, quitting the room, went upstairs to say those few necessary words of good-bye, those words that must be said—that common courtesy demanded even on the night of the eighteenth-nineteenth.

The house was a large house—almost a palace, in truth. There were half-a-dozen drawing-rooms, great and small, each of a different color and period. Passing through the one Richard Bar-

clay parted the portières of a second, and paused before entering the room.

It was long, lofty and brilliantly illuminated, the air heavy with perfume of flowers and alive with the atmosphere of intensest, tense emotion. By the fireside stood the young rajah and close in his arms, her own arms clasped about his neck, stood Richard Barclay's blond girl-wife. It was one of those moments in which the world goes by unbidden and nothing—nothing—counts. It was a long moment.

Richard stood quite still in the doorway, his face ashy white to the lips. There was something terrible to describe in his expression. It seemed as if that had come to him *now* which he had *no* strength to bear. And yet, even as he looked, strength rallied to his aid, and the strange heavy light passed from his eyes as a cloud sweeps over and away and leaves no trace behind.

So he stood quiet and when the lovers drew apart Audrey saw her husband. She screamed and the rajah whirled on his heel. Then Richard Barclay spoke:

"For God's sake," he said, "for God's sake!" Advancing quickly he stood between them and laid a hand upon the shoulder of each. They both started to shrink away, but he was too quick and the clasp that he laid upon them was too strong—too strong and too compelling, too full of that force which overrides and tramps down into the mud the little, the petty, the purely physical things of this world of ours.

They all three were still for some further seconds; then, while Richard struggled with his voice and they watched him in shock of fright and astonishment—then, when he could speak, his words came rapidly—chokingly—poured out upon one another as if they would strangle him in their contest to be heard.

"Never mind"—his tone was one of appeal—"never mind me—it is all very right—it is all very natural. Before anything else, know that; and know that I understand that—that it is all very, very natural. I never knew—I never thought—how could I know

when I have thought so little about either of you, but"—he bit his lip, his brows contracted upward, and for a second he choked in vain for further expression; then—"Yes, I never knew—never thought—but I see and know now—now I understand, and now that I do know there is only one thing that I want to say—that I must say—if I may only be able to say it—and that is that there is nothing to fear—nothing to fear from me." And then he choked again and they both looked at him in deeper fright and wonder, the wonder so deep indeed as to rise above even the fright for the nonce. "You see," he stumbled on presently, "you can't understand at first, of course, but I will explain—I can explain—and it is just this—just this one thing that I beg of you to believe—it is that I ask you, above all things, not to fear me—do not"—his voice sank with a curious gasp—"oh, I beg of you, do not fear me. Do not fear *me*. I am not to be considered."

As he spoke the last words he loosed them, turned to a chair and sank doubling down upon it, fighting for breath—striking his hands together. They looked at him and then at one another—a curious picture—those two young, beautiful creatures, and that white and stricken man down upon the velvet cushions between them. The rajah's dark skin had paled and his heart was beating fast; Audrey's eyes were full of an unfeigned terror now. And between them Richard Barclay sat, trying hard to control his emotion.

But not long. Breath came back and he rose to his feet at once. He smiled then—smiled. With his will he had accomplished that.

"It is because you are both so young and ignorant and cannot understand," he said, looking into their faces and speaking of a sudden almost soothingly. "I have frightened you in trying to reassure you. I am sorry. Listen"—he turned to the rajah; "you are the man and I can speak freely with you. I must do so. Go down to the library and wait for me there a few minutes. If you fear me get a pistol from among

the guns and load it and keep it in your hand, but there is no need to fear me. No man need fear me; the man who should have feared me is long dead and I did not kill him. Go down to the library and wait for me. My first duty is to her; she is my wife, you know. I want to take her upstairs and tell her what is to be told, and give her the boy that she has borne, to comfort her. For you and me, this is all not so bad, but for her—well, for a woman this is very bad—but she will have the boy anyway. When she is quiet I'll come to you. When she understands that this is sorrow—but no tragedy—I'll come to you. Go down and wait for me in my library. Go now."

Therajah looked at him and he looked at the rajah. For many, many years Richard Barclay had ruled men of all colors, kinds, and classes, by the magic of his irresistible will—that indomitable Saxon will which never has turned back where Saxon blood pressed forward—the rajah looked at him and turned and walked out of the room without one word.

As soon as he was gone Audrey began to shake with repressed sobs. Her husband stood gazing upon her, his eyes filled with that same strangely terrible and mysterious expression which had come when he first entered the room.

"Audrey," he said at last, "dear child, listen to me. It is I who am the guilty one if any be guilty—and it is I who am guilty because it was I who took your fresh youth into my dead life and never told you that it was dead. I cannot tell you all the story now—perhaps I can never tell it to you; some stories demand ears that comprehend and perhaps it would not interest you to hear. But this I can and must tell you because it is the truth; truth is hard but I must tell you all that I can tonight and some day, if you desire it, I will tell you more. We won't go upstairs. I'll tell you here. It won't take long. The big events in life don't take long. They prepare to be through ages, but they come upon us in a second and in a second they are

by forever, and then follow other ages of results."

She stared at him in complete astonishment. It was incomprehensible to her. The story of these two was very simple, and the wife had never known her husband. Years ago he had come to see her aunt on a business matter and had noticed the pale, quiet little child poring over a book by the window; he had been the gayest and brightest of all who came home exuberant for a few months' leave, and he had pitied the child and carried her off to a cake-shop for an hour of ecstasy. Of course he had quickly forgotten, but she had remembered and adored him ever after. And when, in ten years' time, he had returned aged by double the period of absence, she had still adored him. Her aunt was then dead, Audrey herself preparing to go out as governess. She seemed very small and slight and unfit for work to Richard Barclay. So he had married her. That was all. But such beginnings make fine stuff for life's drama.

And now the drama was upon them. She stood before him, a beautiful young woman, wondering if he had really gone mad and if she were not dreaming, after all, for so far out of Richard Barclay's circle circled the pretty thing who bore his name.

But he saw her with all-seeing eyes. He saw her in double, in fact, for what he saw was another woman as well as herself and it was to the two, she as well as that other woman, that he spoke.

"It isn't necessary to speak of me or think of me in this; the question is all you. When a woman loves the question cannot be the man or what becomes of him—men are strong and may endure. But the woman is so helpless—anyone can strike her down. Anyone can strike her down. I"—he stopped very short there and then, controlling himself strongly, continued—"Audrey, I must try not to frighten you—forgive me; and I must be quick, for this is a short night for him and I must speak to him before he goes. So listen, my dear, listen and try to follow me. You love him. You have learned to love him

in these four years during which this house has been his only home. I ought to have guarded you from this, but I was blind to all sorrow but my own and now you have to suffer for my sin. What has come about was inevitable—I see that clearly; no one is to blame except myself and I am to blame just as every man is to blame who knows what love may mean and then leaves his wife to learn it of another. I never had any heart to give you, child, and so I cannot blame you. The horror of it all is—not that you love him, but—be courageous—but that you love a man with whom you can never, never share your life.”

She lowered her eyes quickly and the lovely white hands which she held clasped tight upon her knees shook slightly. Richard Barclay saw both actions, slight though they were, and his face contracted spasmodically; but he went steadily on:

“That is the terrible truth. If it were any other man in all the world I could pick up the pistol below stairs and leave you free to marry him, and I would do so gladly—so gladly, so much more gladly than you can fancy; but this man you can never marry. You cannot join his life in any way. A white wife—an Englishwoman—is out of the question for him. The white woman has not yet come to his land; if she goes there she dies. Monogamy has not reached there either; if it goes there, like the white woman, it dies, too. The order of existence out there is altogether otherwise. One may promise, swear, resolve, but in the end one may not resist. This is the sorrow for you. This is the sorrow for me. In my blindness I have led you, or left you to wander where I cannot help you. No one can help you. There is no possible future for you two together. You must take my word for it, for I *know*. I never meant to make you unhappy. It isn’t a part of me to desire to make anyone or anything unhappy. But this man you cannot have. The blow is great, but unavoidable. You can write to him; if he ever returns to England, you may see him

freely and without restraint; but his wife you can never expect to be. Anything to him you can never expect to be. It is hopeless.”

Such a strange little smile played about her lips. She had quite recovered her composure while he was speaking, and now she turned her face directly from him; there was a strange, cold resistance in the eyes which she shielded thus, but he was infinitely wiser than she and read her unspoken thoughts as easily as if they had lain in print before him.

“I will go to him now,” he said, with a strange, sad resignation in his voice. “You will go upstairs and have them bring you the child and try to sleep, my poor little girl, and in the morning, if my help can help you, we will try to arrange your life. All that you may wish, I will do. Remember that always—anything that you may wish, I will do. Nothing matters to me, only that you may be spared as far as is possible.”

She glanced at him then and smiled—actually smiled—slightly. Then, very quietly and steadily, she walked out of the room. Left alone behind, Richard Barclay closed his eyes for a moment and drew a deep breath. Then he too walked out of the room.

Below in the library the young rajah sat in the great chair before the fire, his hands lying upon the lions’ heads. Richard Barclay, entering, went toward him very quickly, and as the other rose to meet him he put out his hand and forced him back down into the chair. Over the previous agony upon the husband’s face there now lay the track of fresh hopelessness reinforced by despair.

“I am going to tell you the truth,” he cried passionately, his lips quivering. “I am going to tell you the truth. I am going to tell it you because you love the only living woman to whom I owe a duty. I am going to tell it you so that you may measure yourself and judge yourself in the silence of your own soul. Listen, and then decide. There is a child of hers that is also a child of mine, but I can care for the child and its future without her help. All that you

and I need consider is her and her happiness. You count in that. I do not count. I count in no way, for personally to me nothing counts. I tell you, as I have just told her, that of me in all this no one need think. It is to prove to you how little consideration I need and how much she needs, that I am going to tell you as briefly as possible the truth about my life. It will show you your own in a new light—in the light of the past and the future. I'll be very brief and only detain you a few minutes, but you will know then what it may mean to love the wife of another. Marriage, children, happiness—all those obligations crumble and fade and wither before the responsibility that falls upon a man who takes the wife of another into his arms and teaches her love. I know, because I did it—that very thing. And tonight in you I see myself and the twenty years through which I have come, and the endless future toward which I go—and the hunger which will never be fed and the thirst which will never find water. Life is bright for you—it was bright for me once. The sun shone and we played tennis together. It was impossible to see anything but joy ahead. But wait and listen to the rest!"

The young rajah sat still, dumb, as if under some spell. Was it in him, any more than it had been in Audrey, to understand what was being said to him, or were his thoughts elsewhere—as perhaps hers might have been?

It was a hard task, that which lay before Richard Barclay—oh, the difficulty of managing in hours of stress these poor, miserable, weak and halting sounds into which we try to translate the greatness of life! After hours on the rack the racked one cries out and what he cries out men may set down in books, but who sets down the story of the hours that went before—or which of the men whose limbs are whole and sound could understand the tale of the pain if it were to be printed? The rajah looked up at Richard Barclay and heard what he said, but to him it was perhaps but a story—much the same as it is to you. Love in a drawing-room does not brand

itself very deeply into the souls of some men and women. And yet there is no different word for the man who is branded to use, no other word for all that may have been once upon a time. A kiss is only a kiss though it crush your world and drive you out in agony to build another of your dead hopes and heart's blood—a kiss is still only a kiss. And love is but love, just the one short word to express all the gradations from commonest pleasure among the lowest people up to Richard Barclay's soul-stricken eyes as he looked upon the man who loved his wife, and looked upon him without anger—only misery over what it all meant.

And then he began.

"For twenty years," he said quietly enough, "for twenty years tonight I have carried this secret. Before that another shared it with me—since then I have borne it alone. You are going to know it now, and as I have meant to be kind to you ever since I brought you—a little lad—into a strange country with me, so try to be kind to me in this hour, for one word a-jar would drive me to the very gates of madness; years have made me able to think calmly of it all, but I cannot tell how speaking it may affect me—" He stopped right there, closing his eyes and pressing his hand to them and his lips; then he folded his arms across his bosom and went on; "I can't tell how the words will sound to me. I have thought of it all for twenty years unceasing, but it has never gone out into the world since—since—"

The rajah sat still because he was unable to rise. There was that in the room which held him spell-bound, deprived him of all individual force and will.

"You are twenty-four years old," said Richard Barclay, looking straight into his eyes. "Twenty years ago I was twenty-four years old. You love another man's wife—twenty years ago I loved another man's wife. I said before that no man knows what he does when he loves another man's wife. I did not know what I did, you do not know what you do. I have learned

since, so help me God, and I tell you that that man is happy who is destroyed or who destroys himself, if living was to hold for him what it has held for me. Love comes lightly, but it roots deeply. A woman is lonely—unhappy—a few words—a few more words—that's the beginning. Then who can know what may follow? With me what followed was a marvel. I woke up to a new world and I looked forward to a new heaven. It was not a woman whom I loved, but an angel. She opened the barred doors of her soul to me and I came to see what love's heights may be. I learned myself—I learned her. I learned much that was hard—much that was mighty—much that was new. The hem of her garment was sacred to me, her wish was not only my law, but God's law as well. I came to understand that through some pre-destined plan of this earth's things I had been chosen out of all mankind to receive a treasure untinged by human sin or folly. I found that the days of magic and miracle were not over and that this woman whose life was bound was to find voice in real life through my actions. Very slowly she taught me that all that she could not be I must become for her sake. She was a creature of marvelous mind and boundless aspiration. Fate had delivered her over hand and foot. She had beaten her wings ragged when I arrived, she tore them off then and soon—very soon—she gave them to me. She taught me to face a life of renunciation for her sake—I would have faced anything for her. She never told me that she faced anything for me. If I had known—

"I had to come to England. I had to be away for six months. We could bear that because after my return things were to be better arranged. We could not tell just what we should do, but things were to be bettered somehow. I know now that she was then in dreadful bodily danger, but I knew nothing of all that then. That was left for me to learn later—much later.

"So I sailed. I am quite unable to tell you anything of what I felt be-

cause if I attempted to do so I might go raving mad even now with remembering our last interview. And of what service would details be to you? I could not know that it was the last, of course. I looked to my return, and I thought of nothing but that return throughout the months that I was absent. It is twenty years tonight since the hour in which I came back. This is the anniversary; it comes once a year and I sit here and live it over second by second. Of course I think of it daily—hourly—at other times, but tonight I live it again, no second escapes—in twenty years not one has faded. I see them go by, one by one, one by one, those slow, strange, dragging seconds of twenty years past.

"The voyage had been so long! There had been storm after storm. To me it had seemed well-nigh endless. But the end did arrive at last. All the day long the right land had crept by us; that always signs the end of a voyage, when at last the right land comes creeping out to meet you. I knew every shore mark, I knew the measure of each mile as it lapped behind. Towards evening the real end drew near, with the fall of dusk we entered the bay—with the dark the engines stopped beating and we anchored within sight of the town. There was a cause which held us prisoners aboard until dawn. I walked the deck all night. There was a great ball—a fête at one of the embassies, and I could see the lights and fancy the music. I knew that she was dancing and the next day someone described her to me as she looked that night. She knew that the ship was in and from the terrace she could see its lights. She knew that the voyage was over and that something was now to be arranged. I can't tell you under what circumstances she lived or with what she was daily threatened, because there again I might go out of my senses. You know I am a cold, plain, hard man, not credited with much feeling, and tonight is the anniversary and my blood is close to bursting bonds in any case—so I must only tell you the simple facts and you can understand or not.

"All night we lay there with the waves sucking at our sides and the life ashore slowly hushing to a sort of slumber and then, almost at once, beginning to start up into the next day's roar.

"The sunrise came at last and the day flamed gorgeous. We got to land, we were free to go our ways; my way led straight to her."

Richard Barclay stopped, strangling again for words as he had strangled above stairs. "Pardon me," he said apologetically after a minute; "for Audrey's sake I want to tell you the whole, but it seems as if my throat will fuse together in the gasp of such recollections. It is my story of love—my explanation of what you should know. I must and will tell it you, but the sentences scorch me like white-hot iron. Well, then, I don't need to remind you of anything or of any customs out there. You were old enough to know all the life before you came away and to remember how death in some circumstances is ordered. It all came to just this: she had been at the ball, she had returned hence just before sunrise. That sun which I had watched from the ship's deck she also had seen. It had risen four-and-a-half hours before I reached her house and when I reached the house she was dead and buried—she was buried. Not only dead, but already buried. In less than an hour after my feet touched land I stood beside the earth that covered her. You see, I was very young, and to me she was under the earth. For a long time she was under that earth to me—"

There was a fearful pause.

"Nothing has counted to me since," Richard Barclay said at last, "nothing has counted since and nothing will ever count again. Now do you understand? The lives of many others hung upon mine and so I could not die. I had to live. I have lived twenty years. I should be very glad to die, but I seem necessary to purposes here. I am very necessary to my wife tonight. I married her because it seemed as if my life which counted for nothing to me might bring her a life that would count for

much to her. It has brought her you. You understand now that your love for her and hers for you is nothing to me except the desire to spare you both all that I can spare you. If I could only give her such joy as had been promised me! If I can only spare you such twenty years as I have lived since that night! What do life or wife matter to me, what has ever mattered to me for twenty years? Nothing—nothing—nothing."

He stood before the rajah and his hands went to his eyes—to his temples as before.

"If you love Audrey," he declared, "a way will be found. I find it difficult to believe that love can be to any others what it was to us, but I am crazed with twenty years of wretched longing and question and perhaps I belittle the possibilities of life. I have told her upstairs there just now that an English wife is out of the question for you, but you and I know that love yields to nothing but Death, and if it is with you as it was with me you will never give her up alive. Years may come and go, but years alter nothing—they cannot. I hoped once that they would alter things for me, but instead—instead it all cuts deeper. You can see that my one desire is that I may not be to her a menace—a thing to be feared. To me you exist as myself, and she is that other. As I have said a dozen times, personally I do not count, personally I am dead—for twenty years I have been dead with my dead love. All that lives of me is the question that I have asked myself ten million times, the question of how she died—and at that thought I—a strong man—find myself still reeling often in the streets. Was she too glad over the ship at anchor there below? Did she cry out in her sleep? What struck her down? And why was she buried still warm? One who is dancing at three cannot be very cold at nine. I—"

The young rajah's lips were ashen; he rose unsteadily.

"Yes, you must go," said Richard hurriedly; "I know how the time passes. Here, take my hand. They trusted you

to me as a boy, and if you are going to make her happy you may trust to me again. I shall send her into the country tomorrow; I shall go away for several months myself. At the end of that time we shall begin to see. Good-bye."

He took the young man's two hands in his and shook them warmly. The rajah's eyes were full of tears.

"Good-bye," the other repeated, "think this all over. Search your spirit for the truth. No price is too high to pay for love, but do not pay as I have for sorrow. She will not be struck suddenly—she will be watched over with all care. But the future bears down upon you and you know as well as I do to what you are going and what she would have there. Reflect carefully. And good-bye."

Then he let him go.

And when he was alone again he returned to the chair in the shadow and sank down there with a groan. And the night of the eighteenth ended as he sat there, and the morning of the nineteenth came softly, darkly in.

All was quiet in the room until two o'clock, when Richard Barclay rose and went to the telephone for a few minutes. Then he returned to the chair and remained there until near four. At four a slight noise sounded in the hall and the watcher raised his head quickly. Someone was moving and he got up and went toward the door. Then there was a light step on the stair and he went out into the hall. The light was turned low, but a figure could be seen descending. Richard remained still. It was Audrey, muffled and veiled, and she did not see her husband until she faced him at the foot of the staircase. She gave a little scream.

"You are going to him?" Richard Barclay asked with conviction in his voice.

She stood still, trembling.

"Come in by the fire," he bade her; "come in by the fire and wait a minute there with me; then I will take you to him myself. You cannot go alone from here to the station at four in the morning. It isn't possible."

He took her hand and led her in by the now dying fire; she was weeping.

"Oh, my little girl," said Richard Barclay, his voice rent with woe, "oh, my poor child, how am I going to tell you!

"This is a heavy night for me," said Richard Barclay. "I would rather have taken the pistol as I told you than have had it come to this. Poor girl—poor child—what have you been called upon to learn! And I married you to protect you and I have brought you to this. Audrey, I telephoned to his chambers an hour ago and he has gone—he had gone then. He left his servants to take the steamer in the morning and he himself went direct from here to the Dover station and got the early Channel boat and the through express for Paris. He will catch the P. & O. at Marseilles—he is well on his way now. And, Audrey, remember, he did that *for you*."

She almost fell and he caught her and carried her to that same big chair where the rajah had sat. But she did not faint, she held herself straight in the seat and stared upward with a wide horror in her tear-stricken eyes.

"I felt sure that you were going to meet him," he said gently, after a little, "and so I sat waiting here. There is no need for me to say any more just now. Life is long and we do outlive much. Try to take that comfort to your heart in this bitter hour—we do outlive much. You will outlive this if you but give yourself time. Tomorrow you will take the boy and go down to the country. For six months you will hear nothing of me. At the end of that time I shall come back, and I shall come to you and tell you the story that I told him tonight. Six months is a long time, and it may have a meaning to you then. It may have a new meaning to me. The dead rise again sometimes. Let us hope so, at least—for the boy's sake."

He took her cold hand and pressed it to his lips. She sat there, silent and motionless, staring upward.

"I cannot understand Fate," Richard said, kneeling at her side. "I was ready to give all that I had left—aye, even life itself—sooner than mar a woman's happiness. And then thus it comes to my wife."

Again he took her hand and pressed

it to his lips. But she took no heed of him, sitting there lost in the wreck of her own dreams. Through the velvet window-curtains stole one single long bright shaft of morning light. The night of the eighteenth-nineteenth was over—for them both.



THE MEMORY

By John G. Neihardt

LONG since the ruined town we fled,
 And dust heaps mark the spot
 Where you and I clasped hands and said,
 "My friend, forget me not."

The shout of War was loud at heel,
 The foeman pressed behind;
 Then you and I turned round with steel
 To meet the Future—blind!

I do not know what foes we fought
 Nor when we gained release;
 I only know with pain we bought
 The ultra-stellar Peace.

I touch your hand—old sorrows wake,
 Like smoke the long night lifts;
 And O, the faint far bugles make
 Weird music through the rifts!



DARK DAYS

PENFIELD—Did that fellow who wrote the book telling how to live on fifteen cents a day ever try it himself?

MERRITT—He had to before his book began to sell.

LES HARICOTS DE PITALUGUE

Par Paul Arène

PERTUIS semait ses haricots!

Des hauteurs du Luberon aux graviers de la Durance, ce n'étaient par tout le terroir que gens sans blouse ni veste, en taillole, qui suaient et rustiquaient; et, dans la ville, les bourgeois, assis au frais sous les platanes, à l'endroit où le Cours domine la plaine, disaient en regardant ces points rouges et blancs remuer:

— Si les pluies arrivent à temps, et que la semence se trouve bonne, la France, cette année, ne manquera pas de haricots.

Car Pertuis a cette prétention, quasi justifiée d'ailleurs, de fournir de haricots la France entière. Pertuis aurait pu, grâce à son sol et à son climat, cultiver la garance comme Avignon, ou le chardon à foulon comme Saint-Remy; Pertuis aurait pu dorer ses champs de froment comme Arles, ou les ensanglanter de tomates comme Antibes; mais Pertuis a préféré le haricot, légume modeste, qui ne manque pourtant ni de grâce ni de coquetterie quand ses fines vrilles grimpantes et son feuillage découpé tremblent à la brise.

De tous ces semeurs semant comme des enragés, le plus enragé, sans contredit, était le brave Pitalugue, La guêtre aux mollets, reins sanglés, il s'escrimait de la pioche, tête baissée. Lorsque dans le terrain, passé et repassé, il ne resta plus caillou ni racine, alors, du revers de l'outil, doucement, il l'aménagea en pente douce, pour que l'eau du réservoir pût y courir. Le terrain aménagé, il prit un long cordeau, muni à ses deux bouts de chevillettes, planta les chevillettes en terre, tendit la corde et traça, parallèles au front du champ,

une, deux, trois, cinq, dix rigoles, aussi régulièrement espacées que les lignes d'une portée musicale sur les *parties* de l'Orphéon de Pertuis. Puis, tout ainsi réglé, Pitalugue reprit une par une ses rigoles et, l'air attentif, un genou en terre, il sema.

— Semons du vent, murmurait-il; c'est, quoi qu'en dise M. le curé, le seul moyen qui me reste aujourd'hui de ne pas récolter la tempête.

Et Pitalugue, en effet, semait du vent. C'est pour prendre du vent, disons mieux: c'est pour ne rien prendre du tout que, de trois secondes en trois secondes, il envoyait la main à sa gibecière; ce n'est rien du tout qu'il y saisissait, ce n'est rien du tout que son pouce et son index rapprochés déposaient avec soin dans le sillon; et la paume de sa main gauche, rabattant à chaque fois la terre friable et blutée, ne recouvrait que des haricots imaginaires.

Cependant, à cent mètres au-dessus du champ, dans le petit bosquet qui ombrage la côte, un homme que Pitalugue ne voyait point suivait de l'œil, avec intérêt, les mouvements compliqués de Pitalugue.

— Eh! eh! se disait-il, Pitalugue travaille.

Perché ainsi dans la verdure, avec son nez crochu, ses lunettes d'or et son habit gris moucheté, un chasseur l'aurait pris, de loin, pour un hibou de la grosse espèce.

Mais ce n'était pas un hibou, c'était mieux: c'était M. Cougourdan, le redouté M. Cougourdan, arpenteur juré, marchand de biens, que la rumeur publique accusait de se divertir parfois à l'usure.

La justice de paix vaquant ce jour-là,

et réduit à ne poursuivre personne, M. Cougourdan avait imaginé d'apporter ses registres à la campagne. M. Cougourdan aimait la nature; un beau paysage l'inspirait, le chant des oiseaux, loin de le distraire, ne faisait qu'activer ses calculs, et c'est ainsi, le front rafraîchi par l'ombre mouvante des arbres, qu'il inventait ses plus subtiles procédures.

Le spectacle doucement rustique de Pitalugue travaillant mit M. Cougourdan en verve:

— Une idée! si je tirais au clair les comptes de ce Pitalugue!

Et M. Cougourdan constata qu'ayant, l'année d'auparavant, prêté cent francs à Pitalugue, Pitalugue se trouvait à l'heure présente, lui devoir juste cent écus.

— Bah! les haricots me paieront cela; je ferai saisir à la récolte.

Là-dessus, M. Cougourdan sortit du bois et se mit à descendre vers le champ de Pitalugue, ne pouvant résister au désir de voir les haricots de plus près.

Au même moment, comme l'ombre aiguë du Puy-lapinier, tombant juste sur un trou de roche qu'on nomme le cadran des pauvres, marquait trois heures, Pitalugue leva la tête et vit venir la Zoun, sa femme, qui lui apportait à goûter. Il rajusta sa culotte et sa taillote, alla se laver les mains à la fontaine, heurta violemment, pour en détacher la terre collée, ses fortes semelles à clous contre la pierre du bassin, puis s'assit à l'ombre d'une courge élevée en treille devant sa cabane, prêt à manger, le couteau ouvert, le flasque et le panier entre les jambes.

— Té! Zoun, regarde un peu si on ne dirait pas M. Cougourdan.

— Bonjour, la Zoun; bonjour, Pitalugue! nasilla gracieusement l'usurier; et, tout en jetant sur le champ un regard discret et circulaire, il ajouta:

— Pour des haricots bien semés, voilà des haricots bien semés. Pourvu qu'il ne gele, par dessus.

— Ne craignez rien, la semence est bonne, répondit philosophiquement Pitalugue.

Et, tranquille comme Baptiste, il acheva son pain, ferma son couteau, but le coup de grâce et se remit au travail, tandis que la Zoun et M. Cougourdan s'éloignaient.

— Hardi, les haricots! murmurait-il en continuant sa besogne illusoire, encore un! un encore! des cents!! des mille!!! les voisins aujourd'hui ne diront pas que Pitalugue ne fait rien et qu'il a passé le temps à fainéanter sous sa courge.

Il peina ainsi jusqu'au soleil couché.

— Hé! Pitalugue, holà! Pitalugue, lui criaient du chemin les paysans qui, bissac au dos, pioche sur le cou, rentraient par groupes à la ville.

— Tu sèmeras le restant demain!

— La mère des jours n'est pas morte!

Enfin Pitalugue se décida à quitter son champ. Avant de partir, il regarda:

— Beau travail! murmurait-il d'un air à la fois narquois et satisfait, beau travail! Mais, comme dit Jean de la lune qui riait en tondant ses œufs, cette fois le rire vaut plus que la laine!

II

PEUT-ETRE voudriez-vous savoir ce qu'était Pitalugue, et pourquoi il avait adopté, en fait de haricots, cet étrange procédé de culture.

Pitalugue était philosophe, un vrai philosophe de campagne, prenant le temps comme il vient et le soleil comme il se lève, arrangeant tant bien que mal, à force d'esprit, une existence chaque jour désorganisée pas ses vices, et dépensant à vivre d'expédients au village plus d'efforts et d'ingéniosité que tant d'autres à faire fortune dans la grande ville.

Songe-fête comme pas un, pour une partie de bastidon. Pitalugue laisse en l'air fenaïson et vendange; Pitalugue pêche, Pitalugue chasse; Pitalugue a un chien qu'il appelle Brutus, un furet gîte en son grenier, et dans l'écurie, au-dessus de la crèche parfois vide, l'œil stupéfait d'un bourriquet peut contem-

pler les évolutions et les saluts d'une grosse chouette en cage.

Le pire de tout, c'est que Pitalugue est joueur; mais là jouer comme les cartes, joueur à jouer enfant et femme, joueur, disent les gens, à tailler une partie de vendôme, sous six pieds d'eau, en plein hiver, quand la Durance charrie.

C'est pour cela que Pitalugue, jadis à son aise, se trouve maintenant gêné. La récolte est mangée d'avance. Les terres sont entamées par l'usure, et quelles scènes quand il rentre un peu gris et la poche vide dans sa maisonnette du Portail-des-Chiens! Quels remords aussi; car, au fond, Pitalugue a bon cœur. Mais ni scènes ni remords ne peuvent rien contre les cartes; Pitalugue jure chaque soir qu'il ne jouera plus, et chaque matin il rejoue. Ainsi, aujourd'hui, il s'était levé, ce brave Pitalugue, avec les meilleures intentions du monde. Au petit jour et les coqs chantant encore, il était devant sa porte en train de charger sur l'âne un sac de haricots. Et quels haricots! de vrais haricots de semence, émaillés, lourds comme des balles, ronds et blancs comme des œufs de pigeon.

— Emploie-les bien et ménage-les, disait la Zoun en donnant un coup de main, tu sais que ce sont nos derniers.

— Cette fois, Zoun, le diable me brûle si tu n'es pas contente!... A ce soir!... *Arri!* bourriquet.

Et Pitalugue était parti, vertueux, derrière son âne.

Par malheur, aux portes de la ville, il rencontre le perruquier Fra qui s'en revenait les yeux rouges, ayant passé sa nuit à battre les cartes dans une ferme.

— Tu rentres bien tard, Fra?

— Tu sors bien matin, Pitalugue?

— Le fait est qu'il ne passe pas un chat.

— Ce serait peut-être l'occasion d'en tailler une.

— Pas pour un million, Fra!

— Voyons, rien qu'une petite, Pitalugue?

— Et mes haricots?

— Tes haricots attendront.

L'infortuné Pitalugue résista d'abord, puis se laissa tenter. Fra sortit les

cartes. On en tailla une, on en tailla deux, et les haricots attendirent.

Bref! l'alouette montait des blés, et les premiers rayons coloraient en rose la petite muraille de pierre sèche sur laquelle les deux joueurs jouaient, assis à califourchon, lorsque Pitalugue, retournant ses poches, s'aperçut qu'il avait tout perdu.

— Cinq francs sur parole, dit Fra.

— Cinq francs, ça va! répondit Pitalugue.

Les cartes tournèrent et Pitalugue perdit.

— Quitte ou double?

— Quitte ou double!

Pitalugue perdit encore.

— Maintenant, le tout contre ta semence.

Pitalugue accepta, il était fou, ses mains tremblaient.

— Non! grommelait-il en donnant, je ne perdrai pas cette fois, les cartes ne seraient pas justes.

Il perdit pourtant; et l'heureux Fra, chargeant le sac d'un tour de main, lui dit:

— La prochaine fois, Pitalugue, nous jouerons l'âne.

Que faire? Rentrer, tout avouer à la Zoun? Pitalugue n'osa pas, la mesure était comble. Acheter d'autre semence? Le moyen sans un rouge liard!

En emprunter à un ami? Mais c'eût été rendre l'aventure publique. Assuré du moins de la discrétion du barbier (les joueurs ne se vendent pas entre eux), notre homme, après cinq minutes de profond désespoir, prit, comme on l'a vu, son parti en brave:

— Je ne peux pas semer des haricots puisque je n'en ai plus, se dit-il en riant dans sa barbiche, mais je peux faire semblant d'en semer. La Zoun n'y verra que du feu, le hasard est grand, et d'ici à la récolte bien des choses se seront passées.

Bien des choses en effet se passèrent, qui mirent Pertuis en émoi.

D'abord, Pitalugue changea du tout au tout. Talonné par le remords et craignant toujours d'être découvert, il renonça au jeu, déserta l'auberge. Lui, que ses meilleurs amis accusaient de

trouver la terre trop basse, on le vit, dans son petit champ, piocher, gratter, rustiquer à mort.

Jamais haricots mieux soignés que ces haricots qui n'existaient pas.

Tous les soirs, au coucher du soleil, il les arrosait, mesurant sa part à chaque rigole et vidant à fond le réservoir qui, tous les matins, se retrouvait rempli d'eau claire. Le jour, autre chantier: si parfois, sous un soleil trop vif, la terre séchait et faisait croûte, Pitalugue la binait légèrement pour permettre au grain de lever. Souvent aussi, la main armée d'un gant de cuir, il allait à travers les raies, arrachant le chardon cuisant, le seneçon envahisseur et le chiendent tenace.

Ses voisins l'admiraient, sa femme n'y comprenait rien, et M. Cougourdan, radieux, rêvait toutes les nuits de haricots saisis et parlait de s'acheter des lunettes neuves.

Or, au bout d'une quinzaine, de-ci, de-là, tous les haricots de Pertuis se mirent à lever le nez: une pousse blanche d'abord, recourbée en crosse d'évêque, deux feuilles coiffées de la graine et portant encore un fragment de terre soulevée; puis la graine sèche tomba, les deux feuilles découpées en cœur se déplièrent, et bientôt, du Lubéron à la Durance, toute la plaine verdoya.

Seul, le champ de Pitalugue ne bougeait point.

— Pitalugue, que font tes haricots?

Et Pitalugue répondait:

— Ils travaillent sous terre.

Cependant, les haricots de Pertuis s'étant mis à filer, il fallut des soutiens pour leurs tiges fragiles. De tous côtés, dans les *cannières* plantées en tête de chaque champ, les paysans, serpette en main, coupaient des roseaux. Pitalugue coupa des roseaux comme tout le monde. Il en nettoya les nœuds, il les appareilla, puis les disposa en faisceau, quatre par quatre et le sommet noué d'un brin de jonc, de façon à ménager aux haricots, qui bientôt grimperaient dessus, ce qu'il faut d'air et de lumière.

Au bout de la seconde quinzaine, les haricots de Pertuis avaient grimpé, et la plaine, du Lubéron à la Durance, se

trouva couverte d'une infinité de petits pavillons verts.

Seuls, les haricots de Pitalugue ne grimperent point. Le champ demeura rouge et sec, attristé encore qu'il était par ses alignements de roseaux jaunes.

La Zoun dit:

— Il me semble, Pitalugue, que nos haricots sont en retard?

— C'est l'espèce! répondit Pitalugue.

Mais, lorsque du Lubéron à la Durance, sur tous les haricots de la plaine, pointèrent des milliers de fleurettes blanches; lorsque ces fleurs se furent changées en autant de cosses appétissantes et cassantes, et qu'on vit que seuls les haricots de Pitalugue ne fleurissaient ni ne grainaient, alors les gens s'en émurent dans la ville.

Les malins, sans bien savoir pourquoi, mais soupçonnant quelque bon tour, commencèrent à gausser et à rire.

Les badauds, en pèlerinage, allèrent contempler le champ maudit.

M. Cougourdan s'inquiéta.

Et la Zoun ne quitta plus la place, acablant la terre et le soleil de protestations indignées.

III

Un soir, tante Dide, mère de la Zoun, belle-mère de Pitalugue par conséquent, et matrone des plus compétentes, se rendit sur les lieux malgré son grand âge, observa, réfléchit et déclara au retour qu'il y avait de la magie noire là-dessous, et que les haricots étaient ensorcelés. Pitalugue abonda dans son sens; et toute la famille jusqu'au quinzième degré de parenté ayant été convoquée à la maisonnette du Portail-des-Chiens, il fut décidé que, vu la gravité des circonstances, le lendemain *on ferait bouillir*.

Tante Dide, qui justement se trouvait être veuve, s'en alla donc rôder chez le terrailleur de la Grand Place, dans le dessein de voler une marmite qui n'eût pas servi, car, pour faire bouillir dans les règles, il faut avant tout une marmite vierge, volée par une veuve. Le terrailleur connaissait l'usage; et, sûr d'être dédommagé à la première oc-

casion, il détourna les yeux pour ne point voir tante Dide lorsqu'elle glissa la marmite sous sa pelisse.

La marmite ainsi obtenue fut solennellement mise sur le feu en présence de tous les Pitalugue mâles et femelles.

Puis tante Dide, l'ayant emplie d'eau, versa dans cette eau, non sans marmotter quelques paroles magiques, tous les vieux clous, toutes les vieilles lames rouillées, toutes les aiguilles sans trou et toutes les épingles sans tête du quartier. Et, quand la soupe de ferraille commença à bouillir, quand les lames, les clous, les aiguilles et les épingles entrèrent en danse, on fut persuadé qu'à chaque tour, chaque pointe, malgré la distance, s'enfonçait dans la chair du jeteur de sorts.

— Ca marche, murmurait tante Dide, encore une brassée de bois, et tout à l'heure le gueusard va venir nous demander grâce.

— Il sera bien reçu, répondait la bande.

Cependant l'astucieux Pitalugue, que tout ceci amusait fort, n'avait pu s'empêcher d'aller en souffler un mot à ses amis de la haute ville, et ce fut, dans tout Pertuis, une grande joie quand le bruit se répandit qu'au Portail-des-Chiens, pour désensorceler les haricots, la tribu des Pitalugue faisait bouillir.

Or, les Pitalugue faisant bouillir, la tradition voulait qu'on envoyât quelqu'un au Portail-des-Chiens pour y être assommé par les Pitalugue.

Ce quelqu'un fut M. Cougourdan! Niez après cela la Providence.

Conduit par son destin, M. Cougourdan eut l'idée fâcheuse de s'arrêter devant la boutique du perruquier Fra. Il venait précisément de rencontrer Pitalugue plus gai qu'à l'ordinaire et tout épanoui de l'aventure.

— As-tu vu ce Pitalugue, quel air content il a?

— Mettez-vous à sa place, monsieur Cougourdan, avec ce qui lui arrive?

— Il a donc gagné?

— Mieux que cela, monsieur Cougourdan.

— Hérité, peut-être?

— Mieux encore! Il a, en recarrelant sa cave, trouvé mille écus de six livres dans un bas.

— Mille écus, sartibois! et mon billet, qui justement tombe ce matin.

— Pitalugue descend chez lui, monsieur Cougourdan. Rattrapez-le avant qu'il ait tout joué ou tout bu; et, si vous voulez suivre un bon conseil, courez vite.

Au Portail-des-Chiens, la marmite bouillait toujours et l'impatience était à son comble, lorsque Cadet, qu'on avait posté en sentinelle, vint tout courant annoncer qu'un vieux monsieur à lunettes d'or, porteur d'un papier qui paraissait être un papier timbré, tournait le coin de la rue.

— M. Cougourdan! s'écria la Zoun, il se trouvait là précisément quand nous semâmes les haricots.

— C'est lui le sorcier, je m'en doutais, reprit tante Dide. Allons, les enfants, tous en place, et pas un coup de bâton de perdu!

Silencieusement, les quinze Pitalugue mâles se rangèrent le long des murs, armés chacun d'une forte trique.

Quelle émotion dans la chambre! On n'entendait que les glouglous pressés de l'eau, le cliquetis de la ferraille, et bientôt le bruit des souliers de M. Cougourdan, sonnant sur l'escalier de bois.

Ce fut une mémorable dégelée; les farceurs de Pertuis eurent pour longtemps de quoi rire.

M. Cougourdan, homme discret, ne se plaignit pas.

Quant à Pitalugue, ayant retrouvé le soir, dans un coin de la chambre, son billet de cent écus perdu par M. Cougourdan dans la bagarre, il en fit une allumette pour sa pipe et dit à Zoun d'un ton pénétré:

— Vois-tu, Zoun, les anciens n'avaient pas tort! Bonne semence n'est jamais perdue, et la terre rend toujours au centuple les bonnes manières qu'on lui fait.

Nobles et philosophiques paroles qui seront, s'il plaît au lecteur, la morale de cette histoire!

ALL ABOUT A PUNCH BOWL

By Thomas L. Masson

“**M**RS. BILTER telephoned over today and wanted to borrow our punch bowl,” said Mrs. Peterby at the breakfast-table.

“I hope you didn’t let them have it,” said Peterby.

The bowl had been hand-painted by his wife when she was a girl and was about the only thing that had escaped the ravages of ten years of married life. Peterby valued it, not only on account of the charmed life it had led, but because it was a kind of symbol of early sentiment.

“I had to,” said Mrs. Peterby. “They’re going to send over for it tomorrow. Mrs. Bilter asked me if I minded and said she’d take the very best care of it.”

“And you were weak enough to let her have it. Why didn’t you come right out and say frankly that I didn’t want to let it go out of the house?”

“My dear, I couldn’t. Mrs. Bilter is such a nice woman, and I wouldn’t make her feel uncomfortable for anything. I told her I felt complimented to think she asked me.”

“Um. She’s never seen that bowl, has she? No. Well, if she had she would know enough not to ask for it.”

Peterby started off to business, considerably disturbed by the thought of what might happen to that punch bowl. While reading his paper a man leaned over him. It was Bilter.

“Awfully good of you to lend us that punch bowl. Told my wife it was an imposition, but she said she thought she knew you well enough.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” said Peterby,

with forced enthusiasm. “Glad to let you have it.”

“We could have gotten one from the Bulsiners next door,” said Bilter, “but theirs was such a handsome one—I mean all cut glass, you know, and frightfully costly, and—”

He stopped suddenly, feeling that he was putting his foot into it.

“Yours isn’t an heirloom, is it?” he asked.

“Well, not exactly,” said Peterby. “My wife painted it when she was a girl, and of course we value it,” he continued, in his altogether too honest, manly way. “But don’t let that worry you,” he hastened to explain. “It’s all right.”

“If I had known that,” said Bilter, disconcerted, “I wouldn’t have thought of borrowing it. You see I could get one for eight or ten dollars, but it seemed foolish for just one night. At the same time, I—”

Peterby smiled reassuringly. It was plainly his duty to put his friend at ease. “Now old fellow,” he said, “don’t think of doing such a thing. It’s all right. Only too glad to let you have it. Why, we both consider it a great compliment to think you knew us well enough to ask us.”

All that day, however, the thought of that punch bowl disturbed him; and especially the fact that in case anything should possibly happen to it it would be impossible for his friend to recover from the loss, for of course, a punch bowl like that was not to be replaced with money.

So on his way home Peterby stepped into a china store and bought a new punch bowl for eight dollars.

"Here," he said to his wife, lugging it into the room, "is a punch bowl I bought to loan to the Bilters. They'll never know the difference."

"What did you do that for?"

"I did it to save our bowl, in case anything should happen to it. I value that bowl more than anything else we have. It may seem extravagant to pay eight dollars, but it's really in the nature of an insurance. Besides, we have this bowl, which we can always lend in place of the other. You send it over to the Bilters. They'll never know. Bilter won't notice it. He's never seen our bowl."

"Well," said Mrs. Peterby, plainly relieved, "perhaps it is worth eight dollars not to have any anxiety about my bowl."

At this moment the telephone-bell rang. It was the voice of Bilter.

"This you, Peterby? Well, I've been thinking it over about that bowl, and we're not going to borrow it."

"Why not?"

"I don't want to run the risk."

This time it was Peterby's turn.

"Now look here, old chap," he said, "I was afraid that I'd conveyed a wrong impression about that bowl. You must take it."

"No, I'm much obliged, just the same, but today I bought one myself. We have to have one anyway."

Peterby was getting more indignant.

"I don't care," he replied, "if you did. It was a shame for you to do it, but never mind. If you don't take this bowl of mine now, even though you have one of your own, I'll never forgive you. You've simply got to do it."

"But—"

"I'll send it over. You use it. That'll be the only thing to convince me that you are not offended at what I said."

Bilter's voice softened.

"Well, old man," he replied, "of course, if you feel that way about it, I'll use your bowl."

"That's right. I'll send it over tomorrow. And be sure you use it."

Two mornings after that, as Peterby

was reading his paper, again a tall form stood over him—Bilter.

"Old chap, I've got some bad news. That punch bowl—"

Peterby looked up hastily in consternation.

"You don't mean to tell me—"

"Yes. Busted. What I wanted to know is how much did it cost you?"

Peterby shook his head.

"How do I know?" he said.

"But," said Bilter triumphantly, "you do. You paid eight dollars for it, didn't you? That's what I paid for mine."

"What do you mean?"

"Now old chap, don't get mad. When that bowl of yours came, I noticed that it was exactly like mine. Indeed, we must have got it at the same store at different times of the day. Then it dawned on me just what you had done. Not wishing to risk your bowl, you'd bought one to lend to me. I, on my part, after I had learned the value of yours, did the same thing. You wanted to put me at my ease, so you insisted on sending your bowl over, though, of course, you naturally sent the one you bought. Now it's been busted, so I owe you eight dollars."

Peterby shook his head doubtfully as he took the money.

"It's too much for me," he said, "but if you say it's all right and are willing to forgive me for the little deception, I shall only be too glad to forget the whole affair."

"Certainly. I understand it perfectly and I've no doubt that I would have done exactly the same thing in your place."

Thereupon they both clasped hands. That night, however, Bilter shook his head disconsolately as he said to his wife:

"Well, I had to lie to Peterby today about that punch bowl. I didn't want him to spend any money on my account, you see, so I told him that bowl of his was busted, which gave me the opportunity to pay him back the eight dollars he spent on it. So now we're square."

"Yes. And we have two useless

punch bowls on hand at a cost of sixteen dollars," groaned Mrs. Bilter.

"Which teaches us hereafter never to borrow from our neighbors."

Mrs. Bilter regarded her husband sternly.

"Not at all," she replied. "What it actually teaches us is that when we borrow from our neighbors, to stick to it and let them do the worrying. That's the real moral, my dear."



THE PRIESTESS

By Aloysius Coll

I WAS a desert bleak and gray
 Where sacrificial flowers lay
 On the ash of their incense, dead;
 But when you came and laid your hand
 On the burning altar of the sand,
 A poppy raised her head!

I was a bird with a silent throat
 That could not wind a single note
 From the trumpet of the Spring;
 But when you breathed upon the wind,
 In silver lyrics thrice refined
 My heart began to sing!

I was a bud in the dungeon-keep
 Of a calyx and the chains of sleep
 That bound each petal sweet;
 But when you passed in the morning sun,
 The leaves unfolded, one by one,
 And blossomed at your feet!

I was a jewel hidden away
 In a gloomy crypt of rock and clay,
 With every fire at rest,
 Until you took me to your heart,
 And kindled Love and Joy and Art
 To shine upon your breast!



"WERE you skating today?"
 "No—swimming."

A SURPRISE IN PLASTER

By Johnson Morton

ALTHOUGH Marian's had always been the dissenting voice in the family concert that acclaimed Uncle Jeremiah a victim of circumstances who had never received his dues from life, she was, at the present moment, inclined to modify her opinion enough to admit that, at least, he had had far less than his share of proper discipline! It is not, under any circumstances, a soothing process to kneel on a dusty floor and extract from a cobwebby cupboard articles euphemistically called "ornaments" in the Black Walnut Period that gave them birth. And when this service is performed under the merciless supervision of a smiling old gentleman in a gray shawl, who lolls in an easy-chair, refreshing himself with raspberry-shrub and allowing nothing to escape his notice and his discussion, a more restrained nature than Marian's might well be pardoned an outburst.

"Put back that onyx greyhound, my dear," Uncle Jeremiah was saying; "I have decided that, on the whole, it is too valuable a gift for Mrs. Drigges, as I suddenly seem to remember that, during your poor aunt's last illness, her calls of inquiry were not frequent. I shall make other arrangements later on."

Marian looked up at him. The smooch of dust across her forehead could not hide the light of combat in her eye. "Oh, Uncle Jerry, it's as heavy as lead; don't make me lift it again. Let the woman have the thing: it will do for an anchor for old Drigges's boat, if worse comes to worst."

Uncle Jerry sighed gently behind his constant smile of good-humor.

"There you go again, my dear, opposing your judgment to mine. Anchor, indeed! Why, that dog is a work of *art*, far too handsome for people in the Drigges's circumstances. I shouldn't be surprised if it turned out to be a *museum-piece*, and I mean to have it examined by an expert, by-and-bye!"

"But, Uncle Jerry, you talk as if you had all the time in the world." Marian turned from the cupboard to lean her head against a packing-case. "Don't you see that we must work as quickly as we can? The house isn't yours, if the things are. We've used up a week already and we are here only by courtesy—by *sufferance*. Really, it's not decent; it's not fair to the Brookfields. I am positively ashamed of staying so much longer than is necessary; and," she added in a pungent afterthought, "I think that you *ought* to be!"

But, as usual, rebuke failed to impress the smooth surface of Uncle Jeremiah's serenity. It returned, in the fashion of a boomerang, straight to the sender. "You are using language, my dear," he sighed, "that in my day would have been thought unbecoming a gentlewoman. But I make allowance for your lack of sentiment, because you cannot understand that the sight of my dear wife's treasures brings back a flood of tender memories. The distribution of these precious souvenirs is to me a sacred task to be achieved with infinite thought and pains. As to the Brookfields, your suggestion *hurts* me, Marian, though I am far from agreeing with you in crediting my step-son and step-grandson with such utter lack of delicacy. *They* will understand, with

every right-thinking person, that I must be untrammelled and uninterrupted in my devoted labors. *They* will respect my suffering and my toil, for certainly the situation is one of unique pathos."

"Unique pathos"! To stifle the laugh that struggled against her lips Marian flung herself afresh upon her task, and drew forth in triumph from the cupboard an inkstand shaped like a horse's hoof, a model in malachite of the Leaning Tower of Pisa and a framed copy of the Declaration of Independence, shaded by an uncanny pen into a semblance of our first President.

However one might doubt its pathos, the unique quality of the situation was not to be denied. Uncle Jeremiah Dreemer, only three short years ago a bridegroom of sixty-two, had renounced bachelor joys for the legal companionship of the Widow Brookfield, nearly a decade his senior. The lady, already the possessor of an elderly son and several grandchildren, was, because she occupied with every show of comfort a commodious house in an inland town, supposed to be of proper affluence. But her sudden death a few months before had disclosed the painful fact that her income had been in the form of an annuity. So, much to his family's regret, Uncle Jeremiah was found to be, with the exception of an added few hundreds from his wife's savings, in much the same financial situation as before his marriage: that precarious one common to poor gentlemen of expensive tastes and little energy.

But, although the house itself was the property of the late lady's son, Mr. Melancthon Brookfield, its furnishings had been left as an especial legacy to her second husband; and, by one of those ironical pleasantries that fate loves to perpetrate, it had fallen to the lot of Marian Dreemer, the least sentimental and the most executive of his nieces, to assist her uncle in what he was pleased to call the "pious task" of distributing his acquired *penates*. Marian's first suggestion, that he should

call in an auctioneer and turn his possessions into money while yet the town's interest was warm, had been dismissed at once as vulgar. No; he preferred, after a few personal reservations, to bestow the rest of his goods upon neighbors and friends to whom they should have value from the point of view of sentiment.

In itself this was a laudable intent, but, alas! decision was not numbered among Uncle Jeremiah's virtues, and now after a week's effort Marian found herself, like Penelope, no nearer the end than the beginning of her garment. Many articles, packed and labeled, encumbered the floor of every room; but Uncle Jerry's mood was sure to shift when the point of sending them away was reached. He would weigh critically from day to day the conduct of each potential beneficiary, always, as in the case of Mrs. Drigges, finding it unworthy of his generosity, and would change and re-change the labels in futile sequence. Small wonder, then, that Marian should turn her back upon him and devote herself fiercely to the clearing out of the cupboard. Suddenly, when the last dust-laden article was hauled forth to crown the heap beside her, she turned at the sound of her uncle's voice.

"Gently; gently, my dear," it was saying. "Do not work so hurriedly. You have allowed me to lose track while I was contemplating this interesting picture"—he held the Declaration of Independence in his hand—"and I want you to stop everything and make a note that it is to be given to my step-grandson, the Rev. Robert Brookfield. You will add also to his list—I must not tax my memory further—the curly-maple set in the bedroom used by his father as a child, and—Marian, again your digressions have well-nigh made me forget one of the most important of my bequests—the bust of his honored grandfather that adorns the bookcase in the hall! It is the work, I am given to understand, of a famous sculptor whose name has slipped my mind; but, beyond any artistic consideration, I am sure that

the young man will regard it as a sacred and much prized memento of the past. Which reminds me"—Uncle Jeremiah, having refreshed again his smiling lips with a swallow of raspberry-shrub, produced from his pocket a slip of yellow paper—"I have neglected to inform you that Robert Brookfield himself may be here at any moment. I received this telegram while you were out this noon, in answer to a letter that I sent him yesterday. Not that I mean to criticize your efforts, my dear, for they are well meant; but, all along, I have felt the need of masculine judgment to augment my own, and I must say that I consider my step-grandson's assent to my invitation *most* polite."

In spite of herself Marian started. She felt the color surge to her cheeks. The situation lost of a sudden its humor in its awkwardness. "Really," she cried, "I think it was quite unnecessary. What on earth will you do with him? You should have consulted me, Uncle Jerry." Then, as her annoyance mounted, she added, "Robert Brookfield of *all* persons!"

Over the old man's face the smile deepened to slyness. He was manifestly pleased, for he rubbed his hands together and even drew down the lid of an eye!

"Yes, my dear," he chuckled. "I should have said that he was *the* person, for I seem to remember that last Winter—"

"Oh, hush, Uncle Jerry; *please* hush," Marian's voice began in protest. But she stopped abruptly, for at that very instant the door swung wide, thrown open without demeaning preliminaries by the stout, red and democratic arm of Mrs. Flanders, the neighbor at present "accommodating" in the kitchen; and past her generous bulk a tall young man in clergyman's dress walked into the room.

II

To find yourself unexpectedly under the same roof-tree, and that a low-branching one, with a man who has

twice asked you to be his wife and whose petition you have as many times refused, is a situation of a complexity that should appeal only to a pronounced coquette. That she was a coquette at all, Marian Dreemer would have denied with indignation; indeed, at this moment, she was more inclined to consider herself a martyr! It was quite in keeping with Robert Brookfield's method that he should respond at once to Uncle Jeremiah's bidding and ignore, utterly, the possibilities of the present complication, which might well have been foreseen by a man of even greater obtuseness. Yes, he was indisputably a direct and single-minded person who followed the obvious—one might almost say the parochial—and did always what was expected of him. But, even while she formulated the phrase, Marian was shamefully aware that it produced the sum of his disadvantage in her eyes! Otherwise he had everything to recommend him: youth, good looks, charm, promise and character. She felt almost ashamed that the lack of what was really an unessential should weigh down the balance of all these perfections and yet, somehow, the objection stood! In a word, she found herself turning aside from a man whom she already more than liked, simply because he seemed not to understand the mental language that she herself spoke so glibly, and wishing all the while that, even in some small way, he could let her see that he possessed the power of *surprising her!*

But when she met him at the door the next morning, Marian's mood was less analytical. Contrary to her expectation Brookfield had declined the offer of a room in the house and had passed the night at the hotel; but his advice, given to Uncle Jeremiah during the previous evening, had produced an unprecedented result. Already a wagon-load of boxes had left the back door and in consequence a refreshing emptiness was observable in the dining-room!

"How *did* you manage it?" she laughed as she led the way upstairs.

Brookfield was regarding her with questioning eyes.

"Manage what?" he asked; "I don't understand."

Marian groaned inwardly. Of course he wouldn't. She shook her head, suppressing in that act a strong inclination to shake, instead, the Reverend Robert himself!

"Don't look so innocent when you know perfectly well that you've accomplished in an hour what I've failed to do in a week! I refer to the separation of Uncle Jeremiah from a portion of his belongings," she explained; "your methods last night were effective. Really, I think that you've mistaken your career. You ought to be a diplomat instead of a clergyman!"

Brookfield turned suddenly at the top of the stair.

"Would you like me better if I were?" he began.

But Marian had taken fright. She slipped past him into the upper hall and chose to ignore his question. "We haven't time to talk," she spoke hurriedly, "for there's still another flight before us. Our investigations to be thorough must begin with the attic, and chattels marked with your name are distributed over the entire house. You are now viewing your first legacy," she went on a moment later as they bowed their heads under the rafters, "a cradle that once contained your great-grandfather. Think of that for a test of capacity! Next comes this hair-trunk, which your grandmother carried on her wedding journey. She had but one, because Uncle Jeremiah, you will remember, succumbed to an attack of measles when the second would have been in order! Then this largest spinning-wheel, a far from convenient size, we must admit, is to be yours; also that warming-pan without its handle, and *one* of the fire-buckets. For some occult reason its mate has been assigned to me; but if you are too tender-hearted to allow the divorce of the happy pair, I might be willing to renounce my claim!"

"Or I *mine*," hazarded Brookfield.

"Buckets or people, I believe in marriage, you know!"

But Marian, by this time half-way down the narrow stairs, hastened again to turn the conversation to the safer topics of treasures of the floor below. "You are now on the eve of acquiring a collection of objects too varied to enumerate." Already she was opening door after door. "Just glance at the tags and govern yourself accordingly. But there's a certain curly maple bedroom set that, if you care to possess, I strongly advise your seizure at once. It has been bestowed and withdrawn a dozen times already—the candidates including the gardener, Ryan, Mrs. Flanders, temporarily at the helm of our kitchen, and—myself."

Brookfield laughed, but he did not speak again until some time after they had reached the lower hall. Then he looked up suddenly from the sofa where he sat with a book in hand revising with evident care the memoranda that he had taken during his tour of the house.

"By George," he cried, "I don't really know what to do with these things! They are all so—so *domestic*, that they seem to take for granted the possession of a house, a wife and a family. What's your Uncle Jerry's idea in adorning a poor bachelor, who lives in two rooms and gets his meals at a club, with all the insignia of an establishment? Can't you," he hesitated an instant, "can't *you* help me out?"

To her dismay Marian felt the color rise in her cheeks.

"Indeed, I can't," she returned somewhat ungraciously. Then as she lifted her eyes she met unexpectedly the non-committal gaze of a pair of plaster eyes confronting her from the top of the bookcase. She twisted a sudden whimsical thought to her advantage, and nodded her head gaily. "But there's somebody who can," she cried. "See! Your grandfather or the presentment of him! I should never have forgiven myself had I forgotten the *pièce de résistance* among Uncle Jerry's gifts. It is that—shall

we call it—Animated Bust; yours by express command! Why should *it* not supply the touch of domesticity that your life seems to lack?"

But Brookfield, meeting in his turn the ancestral gaze, seemed to fall under its spell. He passed by Marian's question to indulge in an exclamation of his own.

"Impossible!" he cried. "This is too bad of Uncle Jerry! It's clearly the beginning of the end; the first sign of mental weakening that I've seen the old gentleman display. Why, he knows perfectly well that I'm the last person on earth who ought to be inflicted with the plaster cast! But he's forgotten, you see! And for years I've been guarding, like a guilty secret, the fact that I am the wretched possessor of the original of the cast, my dear Miss Dreemer; an original in enduring, nay, worse—*indestructible marble*! It was a present to my grandmother—so the legend runs—a tribute of gratitude made and bestowed by an expatriated American lady living in Rome. She was at once unfortunate and artistic, a not unusual combination, by the way, and I believe that my grandmother saved her from eviction. It was a mistake, but I'm sure grandmother paid the penalty nobly. The sculptress had evidently steeped herself, you will observe, in Greek tradition, which comported but ill with my grandfather's type of beauty, unmistakably of New England. That *peplum*, for instance, and that neck furnish an admirable example of the meeting of extremes; or, to be frank, they don't meet—do they?—for more of grandfather's chest is exposed than persons of delicate sensibilities might desire! Oh, I grant you it's bad enough in plaster, but you should see it in marble." Brookfield shook his head sadly. "Marble of the spotted variety, polished like a mirror and yet, despite its brilliancy, carrying a remorseless suggestion of death and the tomb!"

Marian looked up at him with a dawning sense of surprise.

"Really," she began, "I never heard you talk like this before! But, do you

know, I rather like it. It's vastly becoming, and the theme is certainly inspiring."

Brookfield turned; in another man his smile would have been mischievous.

"Perhaps I've caught the manner from you," he said. "We can't help copying what we admire!"

"All of which is irrelevant and avoids the point of issue. Don't lose track of that," Marian interrupted severely. "The question to be decided is, what do you mean to do with the plaster cast? I believe, myself, that you will shirk your duty and repudiate it!"

Brookfield was silent for a moment, and when he spoke again it was with an air of decision.

"No; of course that would naturally be my first thought. But it wouldn't help matters to force Uncle Jerry to a series of fresh decisions in the course of which it is more than likely that you'd acquire the bust yourself! I couldn't be as cruel as that. Now there *is* a way, a *drastic* one, that I'm not equal to managing alone; I wonder if you feel inclined to help me? Listen." He took his watch from his pocket, cast an apprehensive eye at the library-door and lowered his voice.

"It is half-past ten o'clock. I am going to the village on an errand. I shall come back in an hour, and if on my return I do not find the bust in its accustomed place, *I shall ask no questions!* More than that, I pledge myself to manage Uncle Jerry if he should become troublesome. Do I make myself clear?"

Marian had caught the infection of the moment. Though she held her lips in serious line her eyes danced adventurously.

"Perfectly; I quite comprehend." Then yielding to an impulse she held out her hand. "Come," she said, "let us ratify our partnership in crime!"

III

At the open window of her bedroom Marian sat waiting. Before her, against its background of hills veiled

in October haze, lay the dismantled garden, in the midst of which a curling line of smoke soared above a bonfire. Presently around the corner of the house appeared the bent figure of old Ryan, the gardener. Marian leaned forward eagerly, then settled herself in her chair again, for she saw with satisfaction that he bore in his arms the *plaster cast!* To achieve this consummation had not been easy. Summoned to the hall immediately after Brookfield's departure, old Ryan had demurred loudly to her request.

"Is it askin' me to desthroy that ilegant old gintleman ye are, Miss Marian?" he had protested. "Faith, an' it's not meself that will be afther takin' the burthen on me sowl!"

"Nonsense, Ryan; the bust is of no use. See how soiled it is! We do not care for it any longer and it's not the sort of thing that can be given away. So do as I tell you; take it out-of-doors and break it in pieces; then you must bury the remains or, better still, burn them in your bonfire."

Ryan's attitude was still obdurate.

"Bury and burn is it ye're saying? Sure, Miss Marian, 'twould be a crime, I'm thinkin'! The saints preserve us if he came to life in me hands! 'Tis a way the images have, I've heard tell, in the ould counthry. Sure it's like a murther ye're askin'!" And it was not until, in desperation, Marian fell back on Brookfield's authority that the old man yielded and proceeded to lay still reluctant hands on the bust.

"If it's the pastor that's after wishin' it, Miss Marian," he conceded, "I'll be takin' me chance. For thim priests," he added in an awestruck whisper, "is grand and eddicated people, ma'am, and has a knowledge of strange things."

Even now, as Marian watched him cross the lawn, she smiled at the old man's air of mystery. He looked around him cautiously, then depositing his burden with care near the bonfire, he waved his hand in the direction of the kitchen. Obedient to the signal Mrs. Flanders strode ponderously into view: a formidable presence hers, with skirts girt high about the hips and an

axe held, musket-fashion, over a shoulder. She likewise deposited her burden and, arms akimbo, indulged in a moment's conversation with Ryan. Then, as Marian watched, she turned away and threw her apron over her head, while Ryan, flinging off his coat, stood in the bravery of a red flannel shirt, and with a sweep that recalled the prowess of a vanished youth, raised the axe on high. Marian leaned forward: she saw the weapon flash in the sunlight, but to her surprise it descended not with cleaving blow on the shining bald head, but harmlessly to the soft earth! Ryan's face, as he stared foolishly about him, was open-mouthed with consternation; but over the set features of the bust a leering smile of triumph seemed to rise! For a long moment the baffled executioner stood scratching his head doubtfully. Then, picking up his coat, he started to walk away: but Marian's voice stopped him.

"Nonsense, Ryan," she called; "if you can't do it you'd better let Mrs. Flanders try!"

It was the happiest of appeals. The man in him rose to indignation at the very hint of woman's aid. He flung away his coat; he straightened himself; he spat upon his hard old hands for firmer hold. Then, swinging the axe valiantly aloft, he brought it down, broadside, in a blow that reduced forever the bust of Grandfather Brookfield to a heap of unrecognizable fragments.

Marian laughed softly to herself as she closed the window. The episode had been amusing. She felt her spirits rise in consequence, and back of her gaiety was an unwonted sense of satisfaction that it was to Brookfield she owed the experience.

"He is certainly developing a pretty sense of humor that I shouldn't have suspected," she found herself thinking an instant later as the door-bell rang. "There, he's back again already; I'll go and let him in myself, while those two are concealing the evidences of our crime." She felt the temptation of an especial indulgence. "Really, I'm half inclined to be *nice* to him this afternoon!"

But it was not Brookfield who stood on the step when Marian flung wide the door. A bantering word stopped at her lips as she found herself confronting a stout and elderly figure in Sunday black. Behind it, like the semi-circle of a Greek chorus, ranged a group of supporters similarly clad. It needed, indeed, a sharp glance of scrutiny to recognize in the severe central figure the genial personality of Captain Drigges—purveyor of fish—whose usual habiliments were the easy ones of his calling. Once within the hall he refused a chair, and stood, with his companions about him, hat in hand.

"We are present this time in an official capacity," he began, "and our business is with the Reverend Mr. Robert Brookfield who, we are given to understand, is sojourning temporarily in our midst."

"I'm sorry to say that Mr. Brookfield is not here at present. He's gone to the village, but I expect him back soon—" Marian started to explain.

Mr. Drigges interrupted her.

"That is unfortunate—most unfortunate, as our time, owing—er—to our various professional engagements—is limited."

"Perhaps you would like to see my uncle, Mr. Dreemer?" she suggested.

But Mr. Drigges had held ocular consultation with his chorus. It evidently approved his intention.

"No; we will not disturb your relative," he went on, "who, we understand, is in delicate health; but we find no objection—though technically the proceeding may be a trifle irregular—to leaving a sort of official message with you, pending Mr. Brookfield's return."

Marian gave her assent smilingly.

"We constitute," Mr. Drigges's hand swept in his bowing satellites, "a committee of five appointed by the Jenks Memorial Library of the town of Ashbrun to wait upon the Reverend Robert Brookfield and proffer a request voted at our meeting last night. We hope that he will be willing to present us, for the adornment of our rooms, that bust of his distinguished grandfather, once a respected president of

our town, which, even during my infrequent visits to this part of the house, I recall as occupying always an honored position on that bookcase."

He turned as if to bow in the direction of the bust; but stopped suddenly. Four other pairs of eyes followed the gaze of his, only to rest, alas! on an empty space; and, in that dramatic instant, Marian's heart grew cold.

Of course it was altogether ridiculous! Left to herself, she would have dismissed the matter in a fit of laughter; but with all these fellow-actors in the farce a queer sort of responsibility seemed involved which she felt unable to meet. Indeed she realized, for the first time, the utter isolation of a solitary sense of humor! The committee of five had none, that was patent at a glance; there was none in the mental composition of Uncle Jeremiah who, even now, was stirring overhead in a fashion that she knew presaged an imminent appearance, and at this crucial moment she found herself distrusting the quality of which Robert Brookfield only that morning had given such fair promise. No; there was no feasible help. What is more, there was no time to lose. She must attack the situation alone and at once. Even in her moment of hesitation she caught sight of Mr. Drigges's astonished face and saw many a question framed there in raised eyebrows and open mouth.

"Oh, the *bust*," she began nervously, "you were asking about the *bust*! Why—you see, the *bust*—"

She stopped abruptly, with a rush of relief, at the sound of a step outside, as grateful to her as ever was the tune of the pipes to Lucknow, and ran to open again the door.

"Here's Mr. Brookfield himself," she cried, "who I'm sure will be glad to tell you all you want to know."

There was no chance for a word of explanation; no opportunity for the exchange of a single illuminating glance. Marian realized that the responsibility fell from her shoulders as she stepped aside and Brookfield came into the hall. She watched him narrowly. How well he carried himself! He greeted Mr.

trouver la terre trop basse, on le vit, dans son petit champ, piocher, gratter, rustiquer à mort.

Jamais haricots mieux soignés que ces haricots qui n'existaient pas.

Tous les soirs, au coucher du soleil, il les arrosait, mesurant sa part à chaque rigole et vidant à fond le réservoir qui, tous les matins, se retrouvait rempli d'eau claire. Le jour, autre chantier : si parfois, sous un soleil trop vif, la terre séchait et faisait croûte, Pitalugue la binait légèrement pour permettre au grain de lever. Souvent aussi, la main armée d'un gant de cuir, il allait à travers les raies, arrachant le chardon cuisant, le seneçon envahisseur et le chiendent tenace.

Ses voisins l'admiraient, sa femme n'y comprenait rien, et M. Cougourdan, radieux, rêvait toutes les nuits de haricots saisis et parlait de s'acheter des lunettes neuves.

Or, au bout d'une quinzaine, de-ci, de-là, tous les haricots de Pertuis se mirent à lever lenez : une pousse blanche d'abord, recourbée en crosse d'évêque, deux feuilles coiffées de la graine et portant encore un fragment de terre soulevée ; puis la graine sèche tomba, les deux feuilles découpées en cœur se déplient, et bientôt, du Lubéron à la Durance, toute la plaine verdoyait.

Seul, le champ de Pitalugue ne bougeait point.

— Pitalugue, que font tes haricots ?

Et Pitalugue répondait :

— Ils travaillent sous terre.

Cependant, les haricots de Pertuis s'étant mis à filer, il fallut des soutiens pour leurs tiges fragiles. De tous côtés, dans les *cannières* plantées en tête de chaque champ, les paysans, serpette en main, coupaient des roseaux. Pitalugue coupa des roseaux comme tout le monde. Il en nettoya les nœuds, il les appareilla, puis les disposa en faisceau, quatre par quatre et le sommet noué d'un brin de jonc, de façon à ménager aux haricots, qui bientôt grimperaient dessus, ce qu'il faut d'air et de lumière.

Au bout de la seconde quinzaine, les haricots de Pertuis avaient grimpé, et la plaine, du Lubéron à la Durance, se

trouva couverte d'une infinité de petits pavillons verts.

Seuls, les haricots de Pitalugue ne grimpèrent point. Le champ demeura rouge et sec, attristé encore qu'il était par ses alignements de roseaux jaunes.

La Zoun dit :

— Il me semble, Pitalugue, que nos haricots sont en retard ?

— C'est l'espèce ! répondit Pitalugue.

Mais, lorsque du Lubéron à la Durance, sur tous les haricots de la plaine, pointèrent des milliers de fleurettes blanches ; lorsque ces fleurs se furent changées en autant de cosses appétissantes et cassantes, et qu'on vit que seuls les haricots de Pitalugue ne fleurissaient ni ne grainaient, alors les gens s'en émurent dans la ville.

Les malins, sans bien savoir pourquoi, mais soupçonnant quelque bon tour, commencèrent à gausser et à rire.

Les badauds, en pèlerinage, allèrent contempler le champ maudit.

M. Cougourdan s'inquiéta.

Et la Zoun ne quitta plus la place, accablant la terre et le soleil de protestations indignées.

III

Un soir, tante Dide, mère de la Zoun, belle-mère de Pitalugue par conséquent, et matrone des plus compétentes, se rendit sur les lieux malgré son grand âge, observa, réfléchit et déclara au retour qu'il y avait de la magie noire là-dessous, et que les haricots étaient ensorcelés. Pitalugue abonda dans son sens ; et toute la famille jusqu'au quinzième degré de parenté ayant été convoquée à la maisonnette du Portail-des-Chiens, il fut décidé que, vu la gravité des circonstances, le lendemain on ferait bouillir.

Tante Dide, qui justement se trouvait être veuve, s'en alla donc rôder chez le terrailleur de la Grand Place, dans le dessein de voler une marmite qui n'eût pas servi, car, pour faire bouillir dans les règles, il faut avant tout une marmite vierge, volée par une veuve. Le terrailleur connaissait l'usage ; et, sûr d'être dédommagé à la première oc-

casion, il détourna les yeux pour ne point voir tante Dide lorsqu'elle glissa la marmite sous sa pelisse.

La marmite ainsi obtenue fut solennellement mise sur le feu en présence de tous les Pitalugue mâles et femelles.

Puis tante Dide, l'ayant emplie d'eau, versa dans cette eau, non sans marmotter quelques paroles magiques, tous les vieux clous, toutes les vieilles lames rouillées, toutes les aiguilles sans trou et toutes les épingles sans tête du quartier. Et, quand la soupe de ferraille commença à bouillir, quand les lames, les clous, les aiguilles et les épingles entrèrent en danse, on fut persuadé qu'à chaque tour, chaque pointe, malgré la distance, s'enfonçait dans la chair du jeteur de sorts.

— Ca marche, murmurait tante Dide, encore une brassée de bois, et tout à l'heure le gueusard va venir nous demander grâce.

— Il sera bien reçu, répondait la bande.

Cependant l'astucieux Pitalugue, que tout ceci amusait fort, n'avait pu s'empêcher d'aller en souffler un mot à ses amis de la haute ville, et ce fut, dans tout Pertuis, une grande joie quand le bruit se répandit qu'au Portail-des-Chiens, pour désensorceler les haricots, la tribu des Pitalugue faisait bouillir.

Or, les Pitalugue faisant bouillir, la tradition voulait qu'on envoyât quelqu'un au Portail-des-Chiens pour y être assommé par les Pitalugue.

Ce quelqu'un fut M. Cougourdan! Niez après cela la Providence.

Conduit par son destin, M. Cougourdan eut l'idée fâcheuse de s'arrêter devant la boutique du perruquier Fra. Il venait précisément de rencontrer Pitalugue plus gai qu'à l'ordinaire et tout épanoui de l'aventure.

— As-tu vu ce Pitalugue, quel air content il a?

— Mettez-vous à sa place, monsieur Cougourdan, avec ce qui lui arrive?

— Il a donc gagné?

— Mieux que cela, monsieur Cougourdan.

— Hérité, peut-être?

— Mieux encore! Il a, en recarrelant sa cave, trouvé mille écus de six livres dans un bas.

— Mille écus, sartibois! et mon billet, qui justement tombe ce matin.

— Pitalugue descend chez lui, monsieur Cougourdan. Rattrapez-le avant qu'il ait tout joué ou tout bu; et, si vous voulez suivre un bon conseil, courez vite.

Au Portail-des-Chiens, la marmite bouillait toujours et l'impatience était à son comble, lorsque Cadet, qu'on avait posté en sentinelle, vint tout courant annoncer qu'un vieux monsieur à lunettes d'or, porteur d'un papier qui paraissait être un papier timbré, tournait le coin de la rue.

— M. Cougourdan! s'écria la Zoun, il se trouvait là précisément quand nous semâmes les haricots.

— C'est lui le sorcier, je m'en doutais, reprit tante Dide. Allons, les enfants, tous en place, et pas un coup de bâton de perdu!

Silencieusement, les quinze Pitalugue mâles se rangèrent le long des murs, armés chacun d'une forte trique.

Quelle émotion dans la chambre! On n'entendait que les glouglous pressés de l'eau, le cliquetis de la ferraille, et bientôt le bruit des souliers de M. Cougourdan, sonnant sur l'escalier de bois.

Ce fut une mémorable dégelée; les farceurs de Pertuis eurent pour longtemps de quoi rire.

M. Cougourdan, homme discret, ne se plaignit pas.

Quant à Pitalugue, ayant retrouvé le soir, dans un coin de la chambre, son billet de cent écus perdu par M. Cougourdan dans la bagarre, il en fit une allumette pour sa pipe et dit à Zoun d'un ton pénétré:

— Vois-tu, Zoun, les anciens n'avaient pas tort! Bonne semence n'est jamais perdue, et la terre rend toujours au centuple les bonnes manières qu'on lui fait.

Nobles et philosophiques paroles qui seront, s'il plaît au lecteur, la morale de cette histoire!

"I clean forgot him," he kept saying to himself; "I promised him a hundred of that Uncle John money, and I clean forgot him. Ray Borden, too—one of the whitest men and best friends that ever lived! And he needs the money; he's trying to put a sister through college, and he's up against it."

It may be said for Dan Hawley that what he considered the limit in his own case was in no sense the limit for a friend; he had despaired of improving his own condition before another pay-day, but this was quite another matter. Borden needed the money for his sister, and he needed it right away. Further—and this was the really important point—Hawley had promised to let him have it. Borden was relying on that promise. Obligations to creditors did not trouble Hawley much, but the obligations of friendship were sacred, and to "throw down" a friend was the next thing to murder in his category of crime. To keep faith with Borden, in the latter's extremity of need, was a matter of honor; wherefore Hawley had left word that it was "all right."

But where was he to get one hundred dollars? He had considered every possibility in his own case and had failed to find anything that offered the slightest promise. His gambling propensities were known, and one man, who had known his father, had curtly informed him that he never loaned money for gambling purposes. His employer had recently refused to make a salary advance for the same reason. The few people from whom he could borrow had little, and he already owed them as much as they could afford to spare. All this had failed to make any effect upon his cheerful optimism before, but now it troubled him. There was no one to whom he could turn, and he had to have the money.

"I might try Carey," he reflected.

Carey was the keeper of the gambling-house that he visited with some regularity. Carey unquestionably knew him, for he usually gave him a

nod of recognition, and they occasionally exchanged a word or two, but there was no intimacy that would really warrant such an application as this. Still, gamblers had the reputation of being liberal with other gamblers in hard luck.

"I will try Carey," he decided.

He went to Carey's home. It was a desperate chance—a chance that he never would have thought of taking for himself—but the plan that he slowly evolved seemed to offer some hope. Carey would have to help him out; it was a "case of must," and he would make Carey understand it. His determination and his desperation increased with each passing moment; it was an absolute necessity that he should get that money, by fair means or foul, and Carey would have to furnish it.

Carey was plainly surprised and not at all pleased by the call. He tried to keep his "business" away from his home, but Hawley insisted upon the importance of his mission, and was admitted.

"Well, what is it?" asked Carey.

"I want a hundred dollars," said Hawley bluntly.

"On a dead card, my son," returned Carey promptly. "I'm no loan broker."

"I've got to have it," insisted Hawley, and an observing man would have seen that, although he spoke calmly, he was dreadfully in earnest.

"They all have," remarked Carey. "Everybody's always got to have it when he asks for it."

"I lost three hundred and fifty to you last night," argued Hawley.

"But you lost it, didn't you?"

"Yes."

"There wasn't anything crooked, was there?"

"Not so far as I know. I certainly make no such charge."

"Well, that's gambling, isn't it?" said Carey cynically.

"Yes, that's gambling."

"I didn't drug you, did I?"

"No."

"I didn't send for you or invite you or do anything to get you, did I?"

"No."

"Well, I don't see that you've got any kick coming."

"I haven't," admitted Hawley, "but I've got to have a hundred today."

"Guess again," said Carey, with an unpleasant laugh. "I'd make a big hit paying back the losses of everybody who went against my game, wouldn't I?"

"I don't want you to pay back anything," explained Hawley, repressing an inclination to speak with explosive earnestness; "I want to borrow a hundred."

"Sure," was Carey's sarcastic retort; "get a hundred from me and play my own money against my own bank! Not any."

"I don't intend to gamble with it," Hawley insisted patiently.

"But you will." Even the gambler who profited by his weakness held him in contempt for it, and Hawley was at last conscious of how much of a fool he appeared to others. It was galling and humiliating, but Hawley held to his plan and his purpose. "What do you think you want it for?" Carey added.

"It's a little matter of honor that you wouldn't understand."

"Oh, you've been losing some wind bets, and you want to make good."

"I said you wouldn't understand. It has nothing to do with gambling; but I've got to have the money, and I've got to have it from you."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because," and the glitter in Hawley's eyes now gave the gambler something of a start, "I think you'd rather lend me a hundred than be mugged up all over your own house. Now don't make any gun-play," as Carey instinctively reached for his pocket, "because I can get you first."

Carey, being in his own home, was without the revolver that he usually carried, but he had all the coolness and nerve of men of his class.

"What good would it do you?" he asked, a slight pallor being his only evidence of emotion.

"No good," answered Hawley, "but there would be satisfaction in it."

"And the noose," suggested Carey.

A smile, that merely showed passing appreciation of a joke without modifying the air of determination, flitted across Hawley's face.

"There seems to be a little misunderstanding," he said; "I have no thought of murder, but I certainly will mix up and misplace your features in a painful way, if I don't get that money. I can do it before any help comes. Isn't it worth a hundred to you to keep your face in order?"

"So that's your game, is it?" said Carey, to gain time.

"We have to do some disagreeable things for our friends sometimes," apologized Hawley. "This is one of them. I'm going to have that hundred or else I'm going to mix it up with you quick and sudden, and tomorrow I'll sue for gambling losses. I'll go after you in every way that I can."

"I thought you had some sporting blood in you," remarked Carey contemptuously.

Hawley winced. Every man likes to be considered "game" in all the affairs of life, and the suggestion of "a streak of yellow" is considered especially damning in those circles in which Hawley had been largely living.

"I pay for my own damn foolishness without grumbling," he said, "but—Well, there's no use trying to explain to you. Do I get that money now, or do you want to carry your face in a sling, get into the papers, and pay out more later? It's up to you, Carey, and you've got to be quick, for I mean business."

They studied each other for a minute in silence. Hawley read in the face of Carey contempt and anger, combined with a crafty consideration of all the chances; Carey saw in the face and attitude of Hawley determination and preparation, the younger man being ready for an instant spring. He was outwardly cool but tense, but his eyes reflected the excitement under which he was laboring.

"How much did you lose?" asked Carey at last.

"Three hundred and fifty, but—"

"I'll give you the money," said Carey, the bitterest contempt in his tone, "but we don't want your kind in the house. The lookout will be instructed to bar you, and, if you ever manage to sneak in, you'll be kicked out."

"I'll take a hundred—no more—as a loan," declared Hawley, his face flushing at the affront, "and I'll pay it back."

"Of course," sneered Carey, "but I don't want any dealings with you; I don't want your money at any stage of the game. I'll square up with you for last night, and that's the finish." He produced a big roll of bills, counted off three hundred and fifty dollars, and offered it to Hawley. The latter put one hundred dollars of the sum in his pocket, and tried to return the balance. "You can't buy your way back into the game that way," said Carey; "you're barred, so you might as well keep all of it."

"I'm through with your game and all games for good," asserted Hawley, still tendering the cash.

"I've heard that kind of talk before," said Carey; "the yellow man is always through when he loses. But you're certainly through with my game."

"I'm through with them all," repeated Hawley. "I'm no tin god, Carey—I'm just the ordinary brand of fool—but any game that can make me

throw down a friend is too tough for me. What I do to myself is all right, and I've got no kick coming, but the thing that grips me so that I forget a friend is too fierce a proposition for Dan Hawley. I've cut out gambling." He released his hold on the money he was tendering, and the bills fluttered to the floor. "I can't promise this hundred in a lump, but you'll get a little every week until it is all paid."

Carey heard the outer door close behind his caller before he made any movement. Then he picked up the scattered bills.

"He's a new kind," he reflected. "I never knew one of them to back away from any cash before. Perhaps he means it."

It was the careless Dan Hawley, so familiar to all his friends, that sought out Ray Borden and gave him the promised one hundred dollars.

"I hope it isn't going to inconvenience you very much," said Borden gratefully.

"Not at all, not at all," replied Hawley; "glad to let you have it. As a matter of fact, old man, I guess I'm getting more good out of this loan than you are. Now don't try to puzzle that out, for one man has already gone crazy trying to understand me, and I'm something of a mystery to myself."



THE SEA

By Archibald Sullivan

AT dawn, blue waved, it swiftly passed me by,
White-crested caravan across the lea,
Foam-flowered and sunlit laden with the day,
Bound for the desert of eternity.

THE NIGHT OF THE EIGHTEENTH- NINETEENTH

By Anne Warner

IT was about ten o'clock upon the night of the eighteenth. The fire over there on the other side of the room was burning brightly. All around it spread an aurora borealis of dancing reflections, and across the gold points upon the ceiling and out upon the burnished polish of chair and table sprang such quivering flushes of warm response as the emblem and source of life can ever call from the inanimate, born of its bidding.

In front of the fire—a little to one side, perhaps—stood a single large chair—empty. It was a padded, cushioned chair, with wide, flat arm-pieces, each of which terminated in a carved lion-head.

At the opposite side of the library, well out of the light—indeed, in the darkest shadow of a huge bronze vase—sat Richard Barclay. That darkest shadow made by the towering bronze Nemesis was his favorite place of an evening. The figure rose high over his head and her sword swept down in his direction. But the menace of the symbol was no disquiet to him. On the contrary, to sit beneath the shadow of Nemesis and know that her sword is sharp and true may be a singular comfort to some of God's not-yet-perfected creatures. To contemplate Nemesis is not to put one's hand forth for the sword—Richard Barclay carried no imprint of such desire in his sad, quiet face. There may be a time of horrible stress in which man rushes forth with blood that is hot to kill, but let the wrong and the grief be deep enough and

the futility of human vengeance soon overcomes all human desire—"Vengeance is mine," saith the Lord, 'I will repay.'"

So Richard Barclay sat quiet in his library. He had sat thus for so many, many hours during the twenty years which had overlaid his buoyant youth with a premature and woeful age. He sat quite still, remaining as he often remained without moving for an hour at a time; tonight it had been all of two, for tonight was the night of heaviest memories—the night of the eighteenth. Heavy memories truly. Sitting there in the shadow—still and alone—he felt the cold drops start out from time to time upon his forehead as they rose fresh before him. The present was passing him by unnoticed; the past alone was present. Green harbor water swashed idly beside his chair, chains rattled and voices cried, up—far up on the hillside—the lights of the embassy fête gleamed through the embassy trees, and the moon hung overhead, watching—watching. O Moon of that night of twenty years ago, what couldst thou tell if tongue were but allowed to silence!

Upstairs the young rajah was saying good-bye. The young rajah had dined with them tonight. He had come to make his adieux—perhaps forever. The tidings of his father's death were now four days old; with the dawn he would take ship toward the throne that awaited him in the East. Richard Barclay had sat with his wife and his ward through dinner and then had come

away and left them to themselves. They were almost of the same age, those two, the blond, blooming girl-woman-rose, and the handsome alien into whose body and brain it had been proposed for diplomatic reasons to engraft the ideas and customs of another race and land. A slight sound above roused the man in the shadows out of himself at this instant and caused him to recall that dark, slender boy whom he had brought to England ten years before. During the long journey on ship-board his heart had been stirred to warmest pity for the poor, homesick child who, shorn of all his Oriental splendor, was to be cast forthwith into the chill atmosphere of an English public school.

One who was equally at home in East or West could guess at what the cold, mist-laden air of his native country might be going to be to that little prince from the warm, brown-bosomed Mother-East. He had been full of sympathy for the boy, had tried to be a real friend to his desolation, and when later the older had married and become master of a home—of several homes, in fact—he had thrown their doors all open to him who was now become a stripling with large dark eyes, dull red lips, lithe, god-like form. For the young prince was very, very handsome. He had come through all his ordeals bravely and had made many friends—none quite like his first, mayhap, but still, many friends. And now his father was dead and a throne awaited him, and on the morrow at six he was to embark, and this evening at ten—quarter-past ten now—he was upstairs making his adieux to Audrey. Richard Barclay, thinking of all this, thought further, with a sigh, that he must go presently and say a few parting words himself—just out of common courtesy. There had been none as he left the table—nothing that would answer—and something must of course be said. He would go presently. Presently.

And then he sat quiet again, his head thrown back against the back of the chair. A man of spare, nervous build—Richard Barclay. A man of high cheek-bones and hollow eyes. A man of lean,

sinewy hands—a man of curious, quiet, unfathomable expression—and oh, so sad! So inconsolably, irretrievably sad.

He turned himself in his chair, after a while, and sighed again.

"The night of the eighteenth," he murmured; "oh, the night of the eighteenth! The years pass me so slowly by and yet this night comes so rapidly again and again." Then he closed his eyes and felt himself yet once more softly lifted and lowered upon the blue-purple waves of that far-distant port, while the ship, resting from her battle with two oceans and three seas, slept at anchor. The sounds and cries of life kept blowing from the shore and high up on the hillside sparkled ever the myriad lights of the fête. He stood by the rail and watched those lights, knowing well that everyone present at the fête had been told that below there in the bay the ship lay at anchor; and that thought had helped him to wait patiently—to endure with something approximating patience—that last long night—that night of the eighteenth.

Soft-lapping harbor waves, green, purple and blue, did you ever rise and fall closer to utter happiness (and to utter grief) than upon that night? The stars were bright then—so was the moon. Did not all on sea and land measure their brilliancy to its full?—for who on sea or land could sleep that night, knowing that at any minute the word might come to go or come ashore?

Twenty years distant from it all the man in the dark of his great library lifted his hand and drew its back across his eyes, and a sound akin to pain repressed echoed in the room. Then he struck his palms sharply together, rose abruptly and, quitting the room, went upstairs to say those few necessary words of good-bye, those words that must be said—that common courtesy demanded even on the night of the eighteenth-nineteenth.

The house was a large house—almost a palace, in truth. There were half-a-dozen drawing-rooms, great and small, each of a different color and period. Passing through the one Richard Bar-

clay parted the portières of a second, and paused before entering the room.

It was long, lofty and brilliantly illuminated, the air heavy with perfume of flowers and alive with the atmosphere of intensest, tense emotion. By the fireside stood the young rajah and close in his arms, her own arms clasped about his neck, stood Richard Barclay's blond girl-wife. It was one of those moments in which the world goes by unbidden and nothing—nothing—counts. It was a long moment.

Richard stood quite still in the doorway, his face ashy white to the lips. There was something terrible to describe in his expression. It seemed as if that had come to him *now* which he had *no* strength to bear. And yet, even as he looked, strength rallied to his aid, and the strange heavy light passed from his eyes as a cloud sweeps over and away and leaves no trace behind.

So he stood quiet and when the lovers drew apart Audrey saw her husband. She screamed and the rajah whirled on his heel. Then Richard Barclay spoke:

"For God's sake," he said, "for God's sake!" Advancing quickly he stood between them and laid a hand upon the shoulder of each. They both started to shrink away, but he was too quick and the clasp that he laid upon them was too strong—too strong and too compelling, too full of that force which overrides and tramps down into the mud the little, the petty, the purely physical things of this world of ours.

They all three were still for some further seconds; then, while Richard struggled with his voice and they watched him in shock of fright and astonishment—then, when he could speak, his words came rapidly—chokingly—poured out upon one another as if they would strangle him in their contest to be heard.

"Never mind"—his tone was one of appeal—"never mind me—it is all very right—it is all very natural. Before anything else, know that; and know that I understand that—that it is all very, very natural. I never knew—I never thought—how could I know

when I have thought so little about either of you, but"—he bit his lip, his brows contracted upward, and for a second he choked in vain for further expression; then—"Yes, I never knew—never thought—but I see and know now—now I understand, and now that I do know there is only one thing that I want to say—that I must say—if I may only be able to say it—and that is that there is nothing to fear—nothing to fear from me." And then he choked again and they both looked at him in deeper fright and wonder, the wonder so deep indeed as to rise above even the fright for the nonce. "You see," he stumbled on presently, "you can't understand at first, of course, but I will explain—I can explain—and it is just this—just this one thing that I beg of you to believe—it is that I ask you, above all things, not to fear me—do not"—his voice sank with a curious gasp—"oh, I beg of you, do not fear me. Do not fear *me*. I am not to be considered."

As he spoke the last words he loosed them, turned to a chair and sank doubling down upon it, fighting for breath—striking his hands together. They looked at him and then at one another—a curious picture—those two young, beautiful creatures, and that white and stricken man down upon the velvet cushions between them. The rajah's dark skin had paled and his heart was beating fast; Audrey's eyes were full of an unfeigned terror now. And between them Richard Barclay sat, trying hard to control his emotion.

But not long. Breath came back and he rose to his feet at once. He smiled then—smiled. With his will he had accomplished that.

"It is because you are both so young and ignorant and cannot understand," he said, looking into their faces and speaking of a sudden almost soothingly. "I have frightened you in trying to reassure you. I am sorry. Listen"—he turned to the rajah; "you are the man and I can speak freely with you. I must do so. Go down to the library and wait for me there a few minutes. If you fear me get a pistol from among

the guns and load it and keep it in your hand, but there is no need to fear me. No man need fear me; the man who should have feared me is long dead and I did not kill him. Go down to the library and wait for me. My first duty is to her; she is my wife, you know. I want to take her upstairs and tell her what is to be told, and give her the boy that she has borne, to comfort her. For you and me, this is all not so bad, but for her—well, for a woman this is very bad—but she will have the boy anyway. When she is quiet I'll come to you. When she understands that this is sorrow—but no tragedy—I'll come to you. Go down and wait for me in my library. Go now."

Therajah looked at him and he looked at the rajah. For many, many years Richard Barclay had ruled men of all colors, kinds, and classes, by the magic of his irresistible will—that indomitable Saxon will which never has turned back where Saxon blood pressed forward—the rajah looked at him and turned and walked out of the room without one word.

As soon as he was gone Audrey began to shake with repressed sobs. Her husband stood gazing upon her, his eyes filled with that same strangely terrible and mysterious expression which had come when he first entered the room.

"Audrey," he said at last, "dear child, listen to me. It is I who am the guilty one if any be guilty—and it is I who am guilty because it was I who took your fresh youth into my dead life and never told you that it was dead. I cannot tell you all the story now—perhaps I can never tell it to you; some stories demand ears that comprehend and perhaps it would not interest you to hear. But this I can and must tell you because it is the truth; truth is hard but I must tell you all that I can tonight and some day, if you desire it, I will tell you more. We won't go upstairs. I'll tell you here. It won't take long. The big events in life don't take long. They prepare to be through ages, but they come upon us in a second and in a second they are

by forever, and then follow other ages of results."

She stared at him in complete astonishment. It was incomprehensible to her. The story of these two was very simple, and the wife had never known her husband. Years ago he had come to see her aunt on a business matter and had noticed the pale, quiet little child poring over a book by the window; he had been the gayest and brightest of all who came home exuberant for a few months' leave, and he had pitied the child and carried her off to a cake-shop for an hour of ecstasy. Of course he had quickly forgotten, but she had remembered and adored him ever after. And when, in ten years' time, he had returned aged by double the period of absence, she had still adored him. Her aunt was then dead, Audrey herself preparing to go out as governess. She seemed very small and slight and unfit for work to Richard Barclay. So he had married her. That was all. But such beginnings make fine stuff for life's drama.

And now the drama was upon them. She stood before him, a beautiful young woman, wondering if he had really gone mad and if she were not dreaming, after all, for so far out of Richard Barclay's circle circled the pretty thing who bore his name.

But he saw her with all-seeing eyes. He saw her in double, in fact, for what he saw was another woman as well as herself and it was to the two, she as well as that other woman, that he spoke.

"It isn't necessary to speak of me or think of me in this; the question is all you. When a woman loves the question cannot be the man or what becomes of him—men are strong and may endure. But the woman is so helpless—anyone can strike her down. Anyone can strike her down. I"—he stopped very short there and then, controlling himself strongly, continued—"Audrey, I must try not to frighten you—forgive me; and I must be quick, for this is a short night for him and I must speak to him before he goes. So listen, my dear, listen and try to follow me. You love him. You have learned to love him

in these four years during which this house has been his only home. I ought to have guarded you from this, but I was blind to all sorrow but my own and now you have to suffer for my sin. What has come about was inevitable—I see that clearly; no one is to blame except myself and I am to blame just as every man is to blame who knows what love may mean and then leaves his wife to learn it of another. I never had any heart to give you, child, and so I cannot blame you. The horror of it all is—not that you love him, but—be courageous—but that you love a man with whom you can never, never share your life.”

She lowered her eyes quickly and the lovely white hands which she held clasped tight upon her knees shook slightly. Richard Barclay saw both actions, slight though they were, and his face contracted spasmodically; but he went steadily on:

“That is the terrible truth. If it were any other man in all the world I could pick up the pistol below stairs and leave you free to marry him, and I would do so gladly—so gladly, so much more gladly than you can fancy; but this man you can never marry. You cannot join his life in any way. A white wife—an Englishwoman—is out of the question for him. The white woman has not yet come to his land; if she goes there she dies. Monogamy has not reached there either; if it goes there, like the white woman, it dies, too. The order of existence out there is altogether otherwise. One may promise, swear, resolve, but in the end one may not resist. This is the sorrow for you. This is the sorrow for me. In my blindness I have led you, or left you to wander where I cannot help you. No one can help you. There is no possible future for you two together. You must take my word for it, for I know. I never meant to make you unhappy. It isn’t a part of me to desire to make anyone or anything unhappy. But this man you cannot have. The blow is great, but unavoidable. You can write to him; if he ever returns to England you may see him

freely and without restraint; but his wife you can never expect to be. Anything to him you can never expect to be. It is hopeless.”

Such a strange little smile played about her lips. She had quite recovered her composure while he was speaking, and now she turned her face directly from him; there was a strange, cold resistance in the eyes which she shielded thus, but he was infinitely wiser than she and read her unspoken thoughts as easily as if they had lain in print before him.

“I will go to him now,” he said, with a strange, sad resignation in his voice. “You will go upstairs and have them bring you the child and try to sleep, my poor little girl, and in the morning, if my help can help you, we will try to arrange your life. All that you may wish, I will do. Remember that always—anything that you may wish, I will do. Nothing matters to me, only that you may be spared as far as is possible.”

She glanced at him then and smiled—actually smiled—slightly. Then, very quietly and steadily, she walked out of the room. Left alone behind, Richard Barclay closed his eyes for a moment and drew a deep breath. Then he too walked out of the room.

Below in the library the young rajah sat in the great chair before the fire, his hands lying upon the lions’ heads. Richard Barclay, entering, went toward him very quickly, and as the other rose to meet him he put out his hand and forced him back down into the chair. Over the previous agony upon the husband’s face there now lay the track of fresh hopelessness reinforced by despair.

“I am going to tell you the truth,” he cried passionately, his lips quivering. “I am going to tell you the truth. I am going to tell it you because you love the only living woman to whom I owe a duty. I am going to tell it you so that you may measure yourself and judge yourself in the silence of your own soul. Listen, and then decide. There is a child of hers that is also a child of mine, but I can care for the child and its future without her help. All that you

and I need consider is her and her happiness. You count in that. I do not count. I count in no way, for personally to me nothing counts. I tell you, as I have just told her, that of me in all this no one need think. It is to prove to you how little consideration I need and how much she needs, that I am going to tell you as briefly as possible the truth about my life. It will show you your own in a new light—in the light of the past and the future. I'll be very brief and only detain you a few minutes, but you will know then what it may mean to love the wife of another. Marriage, children, happiness—all those obligations crumble and fade and wither before the responsibility that falls upon a man who takes the wife of another into his arms and teaches her love. I know, because I did it—that very thing. And tonight in you I see myself and the twenty years through which I have come, and the endless future toward which I go—and the hunger which will never be fed and the thirst which will never find water. Life is bright for you—it was bright for me once. The sun shone and we played tennis together. It was impossible to see anything but joy ahead. But wait and listen to the rest!"

The young rajah sat still, dumb, as if under some spell. Was it in him, any more than it had been in Audrey, to understand what was being said to him, or were his thoughts elsewhere—as perhaps hers might have been?

It was a hard task, that which lay before Richard Barclay—oh, the difficulty of managing in hours of stress these poor, miserable, weak and halting sounds into which we try to translate the greatness of life! After hours on the rack the racked one cries out and what he cries out men may set down in books, but who sets down the story of the hours that went before—or which of the men whose limbs are whole and sound could understand the tale of the pain if it were to be printed? The rajah looked up at Richard Barclay and heard what he said, but to him it was perhaps but a story—much the same as it is to you. Love in a drawing-room does not brand

itself very deeply into the souls of some men and women. And yet there is no different word for the man who is branded to use, no other word for all that may have been once upon a time. A kiss is only a kiss though it crush your world and drive you out in agony to build another of your dead hopes and heart's blood—a kiss is still only a kiss. And love is but love, just the one short word to express all the gradations from commonest pleasure among the lowest people up to Richard Barclay's soul-stricken eyes as he looked upon the man who loved his wife, and looked upon him without anger—only misery over what it all meant.

And then he began.

"For twenty years," he said quietly enough, "for twenty years tonight I have carried this secret. Before that another shared it with me—since then I have borne it alone. You are going to know it now, and as I have meant to be kind to you ever since I brought you—a little lad—into a strange country with me, so try to be kind to me in this hour, for one word a-jar would drive me to the very gates of madness; years have made me able to think calmly of it all, but I cannot tell how speaking it may affect me—" He stopped right there, closing his eyes and pressing his hand to them and his lips; then he folded his arms across his bosom and went on; "I can't tell how the words will sound to me. I have thought of it all for twenty years unceasing, but it has never gone out into the world since—since—"

The rajah sat still because he was unable to rise. There was that in the room which held him spell-bound, deprived him of all individual force and will.

"You are twenty-four years old," said Richard Barclay, looking straight into his eyes. "Twenty years ago I was twenty-four years old. You love another man's wife—twenty years ago I loved another man's wife. I said before that no man knows what he does when he loves another man's wife. I did not know what I did, you do not know what you do. I have learned

since, so help me God, and I tell you that that man is happy who is destroyed or who destroys himself, if living was to hold for him what it has held for me. Love comes lightly, but it roots deeply. A woman is lonely—unhappy—a few words—a few more words—that's the beginning. Then who can know what may follow? With me what followed was a marvel. I woke up to a new world and I looked forward to a new heaven. It was not a woman whom I loved, but an angel. She opened the barred doors of her soul to me and I came to see what love's heights may be. I learned myself—I learned her. I learned much that was hard—much that was mighty—much that was new. The hem of her garment was sacred to me, her wish was not only my law, but God's law as well. I came to understand that through some pre-destined plan of this earth's things I had been chosen out of all mankind to receive a treasure untinged by human sin or folly. I found that the days of magic and miracle were not over and that this woman whose life was bound was to find voice in real life through my actions. Very slowly she taught me that all that she could not be I must become for her sake. She was a creature of marvelous mind and boundless aspiration. Fate had delivered her over hand and foot. She had beaten her wings ragged when I arrived, she tore them off then and soon—very soon—she gave them to me. She taught me to face a life of renunciation for her sake—I would have faced anything for her. She never told me that she faced anything for me. If I had known—

"I had to come to England. I had to be away for six months. We could bear that because after my return things were to be better arranged. We could not tell just what we should do, but things were to be bettered somehow. I know now that she was then in dreadful bodily danger, but I knew nothing of all that then. That was left for me to learn later—much later.

"So I sailed. I am quite unable to tell you anything of what I felt be-

cause if I attempted to do so I might go raving mad even now with remembering our last interview. And of what service would details be to you? I could not know that it was the last, of course. I looked to my return, and I thought of nothing but that return throughout the months that I was absent. It is twenty years tonight since the hour in which I came back. This is the anniversary; it comes once a year and I sit here and live it over second by second. Of course I think of it daily—hourly—at other times, but tonight I live it again, no second escapes—in twenty years not one has faded. I see them go by, one by one, one by one, those slow, strange, dragging seconds of twenty years past.

"The voyage had been so long! There had been storm after storm. To me it had seemed well-nigh endless. But the end did arrive at last. All the day long the right land had crept by us; that always signs the end of a voyage, when at last the right land comes creeping out to meet you. I knew every shore mark, I knew the measure of each mile as it lapped behind. Towards evening the real end drew near, with the fall of dusk we entered the bay—with the dark the engines stopped beating and we anchored within sight of the town. There was a cause which held us prisoners aboard until dawn. I walked the deck all night. There was a great ball—a fête at one of the embassies, and I could see the lights and fancy the music. I knew that she was dancing and the next day someone described her to me as she looked that night. She knew that the ship was in and from the terrace she could see its lights. She knew that the voyage was over and that something was now to be arranged. I can't tell you under what circumstances she lived or with what she was daily threatened, because there again I might go out of my senses. You know I am a cold, plain, hard man, not credited with much feeling, and tonight is the anniversary and my blood is close to bursting bonds in any case—so I must only tell you the simple facts and you can understand or not.

"All night we lay there with the waves sucking at our sides and the life ashore slowly hushing to a sort of slumber and then, almost at once, beginning to start up into the next day's roar.

"The sunrise came at last and the day flamed gorgeous. We got to land, we were free to go our ways; my way led straight to her."

Richard Barclay stopped, strangling again for words as he had strangled above stairs. "Pardon me," he said apologetically after a minute; "for Audrey's sake I want to tell you the whole, but it seems as if my throat will fuse together in the gasp of such recollections. It is my story of love—my explanation of what you should know. I must and will tell it you, but the sentences scorch me like white-hot iron. Well, then, I don't need to remind you of anything or of any customs out there. You were old enough to know all the life before you came away and to remember how death in some circumstances is ordered. It all came to just this: she had been at the ball, she had returned hence just before sunrise. That sun which I had watched from the ship's deck she also had seen. It had risen four-and-a-half hours before I reached her house and when I reached the house she was dead and buried—she was buried. Not only dead, but already buried. In less than an hour after my feet touched land I stood beside the earth that covered her. You see, I was very young, and to me she was under the earth. For a long time she was under that earth to me—"

There was a fearful pause.

"Nothing has counted to me since," Richard Barclay said at last, "nothing has counted since and nothing will ever count again. Now do you understand? The lives of many others hung upon mine and so I could not die. I had to live. I have lived twenty years. I should be very glad to die, but I seem necessary to purposes here. I am very necessary to my wife tonight. I married her because it seemed as if my life which counted for nothing to me might bring her a life that would count for

much to her. It has brought her you. You understand now that your love for her and hers for you is nothing to me except the desire to spare you both all that I can spare you. If I could only give her such joy as had been promised me! If I can only spare you such twenty years as I have lived since that night! What do life or wife matter to me, what has ever mattered to me for twenty years? Nothing—nothing—nothing."

He stood before the rajah and his hands went to his eyes—to his temples as before.

"If you love Audrey," he declared, "a way will be found. I find it difficult to believe that love can be to any others what it was to us, but I am crazed with twenty years of wretched longing and question and perhaps I belittle the possibilities of life. I have told her upstairs there just now that an English wife is out of the question for you, but you and I know that love yields to nothing but Death, and if it is with you as it was with me you will never give her up alive. Years may come and go, but years alter nothing—they cannot. I hoped once that they would alter things for me, but instead—instead it all cuts deeper. You can see that my one desire is that I may not be to her a menace—a thing to be feared. To me you exist as myself, and she is that other. As I have said a dozen times, personally I do not count, personally I am dead—for twenty years I have been dead with my dead love. All that lives of me is the question that I have asked myself ten million times, the question of how she died—and at that thought I—a strong man—find myself still reeling often in the streets. Was she too glad over the ship at anchor there below? Did she cry out in her sleep? What struck her down? And why was she buried still warm? One who is dancing at three cannot be very cold at nine. I—"

The young rajah's lips were ashen; he rose unsteadily.

"Yes, you must go," said Richard hurriedly; "I know how the time passes. Here, take my hand. They trusted you

to me as a boy, and if you are going to make her happy you may trust to me again. I shall send her into the country tomorrow; I shall go away for several months myself. At the end of that time we shall begin to see. Good-bye."

He took the young man's two hands in his and shook them warmly. The rajah's eyes were full of tears.

"Good-bye," the other repeated, "think this all over. Search your spirit for the truth. No price is too high to pay for love, but do not pay as I have for sorrow. She will not be struck suddenly—she will be watched over with all care. But the future bears down upon you and you know as well as I do to what you are going and what she would have there. Reflect carefully. And good-bye."

Then he let him go.

And when he was alone again he returned to the chair in the shadow and sank down there with a groan. And the night of the eighteenth ended as he sat there, and the morning of the nineteenth came softly, darkly in.

All was quiet in the room until two o'clock, when Richard Barclay rose and went to the telephone for a few minutes. Then he returned to the chair and remained there until near four. At four a slight noise sounded in the hall and the watcher raised his head quickly. Someone was moving and he got up and went toward the door. Then there was a light step on the stair and he went out into the hall. The light was turned low, but a figure could be seen descending. Richard remained still. It was Audrey, muffled and veiled, and she did not see her husband until she faced him at the foot of the staircase. She gave a little scream.

"You are going to him?" Richard Barclay asked with conviction in his voice.

She stood still, trembling.

"Come in by the fire," he bade her; "come in by the fire and wait a minute there with me; then I will take you to him myself. You cannot go alone from here to the station at four in the morning. It isn't possible."

He took her hand and led her in by the now dying fire; she was weeping.

"Oh, my little girl," said Richard Barclay, his voice rent with woe, "oh, my poor child, how am I going to tell you!

"This is a heavy night for me," said Richard Barclay. "I would rather have taken the pistol as I told you than have had it come to this. Poor girl—poor child—what have you been called upon to learn! And I married you to protect you and I have brought you to this. Audrey, I telephoned to his chambers an hour ago and he has gone—he had gone then. He left his servants to take the steamer in the morning and he himself went direct from here to the Dover station and got the early Channel boat and the through express for Paris. He will catch the P. & O. at Marseilles—he is well on his way now. And, Audrey, remember, he did that for you."

She almost fell and he caught her and carried her to that same big chair where the rajah had sat. But she did not faint, she held herself straight in the seat and stared upward with a wide horror in her tear-stricken eyes.

"I felt sure that you were going to meet him," he said gently, after a little, "and so I sat waiting here. There is no need for me to say any more just now. Life is long and we do outlive much. Try to take that comfort to your heart in this bitter hour—we do outlive much. You will outlive this if you but give yourself time. Tomorrow you will take the boy and go down to the country. For six months you will hear nothing of me. At the end of that time I shall come back, and I shall come to you and tell you the story that I told him tonight. Six months is a long time, and it may have a meaning to you then. It may have a new meaning to me. The dead rise again sometimes. Let us hope so, at least—for the boy's sake."

He took her cold hand and pressed it to his lips. She sat there, silent and motionless, staring upward.

"I cannot understand Fate," Richard said, kneeling at her side. "I was ready to give all that I had left—aye, even life itself—sooner than mar a woman's happiness. And then thus it comes to my wife."

Again he took her hand and pressed

it to his lips. But she took no heed of him, sitting there lost in the wreck of her own dreams. Through the velvet window-curtains stole one single long bright shaft of morning light. The night of the eighteenth-nineteenth was over—for them both.



THE MEMORY

By John G. Neihardt

LONG since the ruined town we fled,
 And dust heaps mark the spot
 Where you and I clasped hands and said,
 "My friend, forget me not."

The shout of War was loud at heel,
 The foeman pressed behind;
 Then you and I turned round with steel
 To meet the Future—blind!

I do not know what foes we fought
 Nor when we gained release;
 I only know with pain we bought
 The ultra-stellar Peace.

I touch your hand—old sorrows wake,
 Like smoke the long night lifts;
 And O, the faint far bugles make
 Weird music through the rifts!



DARK DAYS

PENFIELD—Did that fellow who wrote the book telling how to live on fifteen cents a day ever try it himself?

MERRITT—He had to before his book began to sell.

LES HARICOTS DE PITALUGUE

Par Paul Arène

PERTUIS semait ses haricots!

Des hauteurs du Luberon aux graviers de la Durance, ce n'étaient par tout le terroir que gens sans blouse ni veste, en taillole, qui suaient et rustiquaient; et, dans la ville, les bourgeois, assis au frais sous les platanes, à l'endroit où le Cours domine la plaine, disaient en regardant ces points rouges et blancs remuer:

— Si les pluies arrivent à temps, et que la semence se trouve bonne, la France, cette année, ne manquera pas de haricots.

Car Pertuis à cette prétention, quasi justifiée d'ailleurs, de fournir de haricots la France entière. Pertuis aurait pu, grâce à son sol et à son climat, cultiver la garance comme Avignon, ou le chardon à foulon comme Saint-Remy; Pertuis aurait pu dorer ses champs de froment comme Arles, ou les ensanglanter de tomates comme Antibes; mais Pertuis a préféré le haricot, légume modeste, qui ne manque pourtant ni de grâce ni de coquetterie quand ses fines vrilles grimpantes et son feuillage découpé tremblent à la brise.

De tous ces semeurs semant comme des enragés, le plus enragé, sans contredit, était le brave Pitalugue, La guêtre aux mollets, reins sanglés, il s'escrimait de la pioche, tête baissée. Lorsque dans le terrain, passé et repassé, il ne resta plus caillou ni racine, alors, du revers de l'outil, doucement, il l'aménagea en pente douce, pour que l'eau du réservoir pût y courir. Le terrain aménagé, il prit un long cordeau, muni à ses deux bouts de chevilletes, planta les chevilletes en terre, tendit la corde et traça, parallèles au front du champ,

une, deux, trois, cinq, dix rigoles, aussi régulièrement espacées que les lignes d'une portée musicale sur les *parties* de l'Orphéon de Pertuis. Puis, tout ainsi réglé, Pitalugue reprit une par une ses rigoles et, l'air attentif, un genou en terre, il sema.

— Semons du vent, murmurait-il; c'est, quoi qu'en dise M. le curé, le seul moyen qui me reste aujourd'hui de ne pas récolter la tempête.

Et Pitalugue, en effet, semait du vent. C'est pour prendre du vent, disons mieux: c'est pour ne rien prendre du tout que, de trois secondes en trois secondes, il envoyait la main à sa gibecière; ce n'est rien du tout qu'il y saisissait, ce n'est rien du tout que son pouce et son index rapprochés déposaient avec soin dans le sillon; et la paume de sa main gauche, rabattant à chaque fois la terre friable et blutée, ne recouvrait que des haricots imaginaires.

Cependant, à cent mètres au-dessus du champ, dans le petit bosquet qui ombrage la côte, un homme que Pitalugue ne voyait point suivait de l'œil, avec intérêt, les mouvements compliqués de Pitalugue.

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Mais ce n'était pas un hibou, c'était mieux: c'était M. Cougourdan, le redouté M. Cougourdan, arpenteur juré, marchand de biens, que la rumeur publique accusait de se divertir parfois à l'usure.

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Le spectacle doucement rustique de Pitalugue travaillant mit M. Cougourdan en verve:

— Une idée! si je tirais au clair les comptes de ce Pitalugue!

Et M. Cougourdan constata qu'ayant, l'année d'auparavant, prêté cent francs à Pitalugue, Pitalugue se trouvait à l'heure présente, lui devoir juste cent écus.

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— Té! Zoun, regarde un peu si on ne dirait pas M. Cougourdan.

— Bonjour, la Zoun; bonjour, Pitalugue! nasilla gracieusement l'usurier; et, tout en jetant sur le champ un regard discret et circulaire, il ajouta:

— Pour des haricots bien semés, voilà des haricots bien semés. Pourvu qu'il ne gele, par dessus.

— Ne craignez rien, la semence est bonne, répondit philosophiquement Pitalugue.

Et, tranquille comme Baptiste, il acheva son pain, ferma son couteau, but le coup de grâce et se remit au travail, tandis que la Zoun et M. Cougourdan s'éloignaient.

— Hardi, les haricots! murmurait-il en continuant sa besogne illusoire, encore un! un encore! des cents!! des mille!!! les voisins aujourd'hui ne diront pas que Pitalugue ne fait rien et qu'il a passé le temps à faînéanter sous sa courge.

Il peina ainsi jusqu'au soleil couché.

— Hé! Pitalugue, holà! Pitalugue, lui criaient du chemin les paysans qui, bissac au dos, pioche sur le cou, rentraient par groupes à la ville.

— Tu sèmeras le restant demain!

— La mère des jours n'est pas morte!

Enfin Pitalugue se décida à quitter son champ. Avant de partir, il regarda:

— Beau travail! murmurait-il d'un air à la fois narquois et satisfait, beau travail! Mais, comme dit Jean de la lune qui riait en tondant ses œufs, cette fois le rire vaut plus que la laine!

II

PEUT-ETRE voudriez-vous savoir ce qu'était Pitalugue, et pourquoi il avait adopté, en fait de haricots, cet étrange procédé de culture.

Pitalugue était philosophe, un vrai philosophe de campagne, prenant le temps comme il vient et le soleil comme il se lève, arrangeant tant bien que mal, à force d'esprit, une existence chaque jour désorganisée pas ses vices, et dépensant à vivre d'expédients au village plus d'efforts et d'ingéniosité que tant d'autres à faire fortune dans la grande ville.

Songe-fête comme pas un, pour une partie de bastidon. Pitalugue laisse en l'air fenaïson et vendange; Pitalugue pêche, Pitalugue chasse; Pitalugue a un chien qu'il appelle Brutus, un furet gîte en son grenier, et dans l'écurie, au-dessus de la crèche parfois vide, l'œil stupéfait d'un bourriquet peut contem-

pler les évolutions et les saluts d'une grosse chouette en cage.

Le pire de tout, c'est que Pitalugue est joueur; mais là jouer comme les cartes, joueur à jouer enfant et femme, joueur, disent les gens, à tailler une partie de vendôme, sous six pieds d'eau, en plein hiver, quand la Durance charrie.

C'est pour cela que Pitalugue, jadis à son aise, se trouve maintenant gêné. La récolte est mangée d'avance. Les terres sont entamées par l'usure, et quelles scènes quand il rentre un peu gris et la poche vide dans sa maisonnette du Portail-des-Chiens! Quels remords aussi; car, au fond, Pitalugue a bon cœur. Mais ni scènes ni remords ne peuvent rien contre les cartes; Pitalugue jure chaque soir qu'il ne jouera plus, et chaque matin il rejoue. Ainsi, aujourd'hui, il s'était levé, ce brave Pitalugue, avec les meilleures intentions du monde. Au petit jour et les coqs chantant encore, il était devant sa porte en train de charger sur l'âne un sac de haricots. Et quels haricots! de vrais haricots de semence, émaillés, lourds comme des balles, ronds et blancs comme des œufs de pigeon.

— Emploie-les bien et ménage-les, disait la Zoun en donnant un coup de main, tu sais que ce sont nos derniers.

— Cette fois, Zoun, le diable me brûle si tu n'es pas contente!... A ce soir!... *Arri!* bourriquet.

Et Pitalugue était parti, vertueux, derrière son âne.

Par malheur, aux portes de la ville, il rencontre le perruquier Fra qui s'en revenait les yeux rouges, ayant passé sa nuit à battre les cartes dans une ferme.

— Tu rentres bien tard, Fra?

— Tu sors bien matin, Pitalugue?

— Le fait est qu'il ne passe pas un chat.

— Ce serait peut-être l'occasion d'en tailler une.

— Pas pour un million, Fra!

— Voyons, rien qu'une petite, Pitalugue?

— Et mes haricots?

— Tes haricots attendront.

L'infortuné Pitalugue résista d'abord, puis se laissa tenter. Fra sortit les

cartes. On en tailla une, on en tailla deux, et les haricots attendirent.

Bref! l'alouette montait des blés, et les premiers rayons coloraient en rose la petite muraille de pierre sèche sur laquelle les deux joueurs jouaient, assis à califourchon, lorsque Pitalugue, retournant ses poches, s'aperçut qu'il avait tout perdu.

— Cinq francs sur parole, dit Fra.

— Cinq francs, ça va! répondit Pitalugue.

Les cartes tournèrent et Pitalugue perdit.

— Quitte ou double?

— Quitte ou double!

Pitalugue perdit encore.

— Maintenant, le tout contre ta semence.

Pitalugue accepta, il était fou, ses mains tremblaient.

— Non! grommelait-il en donnant, je ne perdrai pas cette fois, les cartes ne seraient pas justes.

Il perdit pourtant; et l'heureux Fra, chargeant le sac d'un tour de main, lui dit:

— La prochaine fois, Pitalugue, nous jouerons l'âne.

Que faire? Rentrer, tout avouer à la Zoun? Pitalugue n'osa pas, la mesure était comble. Acheter d'autre semence? Le moyen sans un rouge liard!

En emprunter à un ami? Mais c'eût été rendre l'aventure publique. Assuré du moins de la discrétion du barbier (les joueurs ne se vendent pas entre eux), notre homme, après cinq minutes de profond désespoir, prit, comme on l'a vu, son parti en brave:

— Je ne peux pas semer des haricots puisque je n'en ai plus, se dit-il en riant dans sa barbiche, mais je peux faire semblant d'en semer. La Zoun n'y verra que du feu, le hasard est grand, et d'ici à la récolte bien des choses se seront passées.

Bien des choses en effet se passèrent, qui mirent Pertuis en émoi.

D'abord, Pitalugue changea du tout au tout. Talonné par le remords et craignant toujours d'être découvert, il renonça au jeu, déserta l'auberge. Lui, que ses meilleurs amis accusaient de

"All night we lay there with the waves sucking at our sides and the life ashore slowly hushing to a sort of slumber and then, almost at once, beginning to start up into the next day's roar.

"The sunrise came at last and the day flamed gorgeous. We got to land, we were free to go our ways; my way led straight to her."

Richard Barclay stopped, strangling again for words as he had strangled above stairs. "Pardon me," he said apologetically after a minute; "for Audrey's sake I want to tell you the whole, but it seems as if my throat will fuse together in the gasp of such recollections. It is my story of love—my explanation of what you should know. I must and will tell it you, but the sentences scorch me like white-hot iron. Well, then, I don't need to remind you of anything or of any customs out there. You were old enough to know all the life before you came away and to remember how death in some circumstances is ordered. It all came to just this: she had been at the ball, she had returned hence just before sunrise. That sun which I had watched from the ship's deck she also had seen. It had risen four-and-a-half hours before I reached her house and when I reached the house she was dead and buried—she was buried. Not only dead, but already buried. In less than an hour after my feet touched land I stood beside the earth that covered her. You see, I was very young, and to me she was under the earth. For a long time she was under that earth to me—"

There was a fearful pause.

"Nothing has counted to me since," Richard Barclay said at last, "nothing has counted since and nothing will ever count again. Now do you understand? The lives of many others hung upon mine and so I could not die. I had to live. I have lived twenty years. I should be very glad to die, but I seem necessary to purposes here. I am very necessary to my wife tonight. I married her because it seemed as if my life which counted for nothing to me might bring her a life that would count for

much to her. It has brought her you. You understand now that your love for her and hers for you is nothing to me except the desire to spare you both all that I can spare you. If I could only give her such joy as had been promised me! If I can only spare you such twenty years as I have lived since that night! What do life or wife matter to me, what has ever mattered to me for twenty years? Nothing—nothing—nothing."

He stood before the rajah and his hands went to his eyes—to his temples as before.

"If you love Audrey," he declared, "a way will be found. I find it difficult to believe that love can be to any others what it was to us, but I am crazed with twenty years of wretched longing and question and perhaps I belittle the possibilities of life. I have told her upstairs there just now that an English wife is out of the question for you, but you and I know that love yields to nothing but Death, and if it is with you as it was with me you will never give her up alive. Years may come and go, but years alter nothing—they cannot. I hoped once that they would alter things for me, but instead—instead it all cuts deeper. You can see that my one desire is that I may not be to her a menace—a thing to be feared. To me you exist as myself, and she is that other. As I have said a dozen times, personally I do not count, personally I am dead—for twenty years I have been dead with my dead love. All that lives of me is the question that I have asked myself ten million times, the question of how she died—and at that thought I—a strong man—find myself still reeling often in the streets. Was she too glad over the ship at anchor there below? Did she cry out in her sleep? What struck her down? And why was she buried still warm? One who is dancing at three cannot be very cold at nine. I—"

The young rajah's lips were ashen; he rose unsteadily.

"Yes, you must go," said Richard hurriedly; "I know how the time passes. Here, take my hand. They trusted you

to me as a boy, and if you are going to make her happy you may trust to me again. I shall send her into the country tomorrow; I shall go away for several months myself. At the end of that time we shall begin to see. Good-bye."

He took the young man's two hands in his and shook them warmly. The rajah's eyes were full of tears.

"Good-bye," the other repeated, "think this all over. Search your spirit for the truth. No price is too high to pay for love, but do not pay as I have for sorrow. She will not be struck suddenly—she will be watched over with all care. But the future bears down upon you and you know as well as I do to what you are going and what she would have there. Reflect carefully. And good-bye."

Then he let him go.

And when he was alone again he returned to the chair in the shadow and sank down there with a groan. And the night of the eighteenth ended as he sat there, and the morning of the nineteenth came softly, darkly in.

All was quiet in the room until two o'clock, when Richard Barclay rose and went to the telephone for a few minutes. Then he returned to the chair and remained there until near four. At four a slight noise sounded in the hall and the watcher raised his head quickly. Someone was moving and he got up and went toward the door. Then there was a light step on the stair and he went out into the hall. The light was turned low, but a figure could be seen descending. Richard remained still. It was Audrey, muffled and veiled, and she did not see her husband until she faced him at the foot of the staircase. She gave a little scream.

"You are going to him?" Richard Barclay asked with conviction in his voice.

She stood still, trembling.

"Come in by the fire," he bade her; "come in by the fire and wait a minute there with me; then I will take you to him myself. You cannot go alone from here to the station at four in the morning. It isn't possible."

He took her hand and led her in by the now dying fire; she was weeping.

"Oh, my little girl," said Richard Barclay, his voice rent with woe, "oh, my poor child, how am I going to tell you!"

"This is a heavy night for me," said Richard Barclay. "I would rather have taken the pistol as I told you than have had it come to this. Poor girl—poor child—what have you been called upon to learn! And I married you to protect you and I have brought you to this. Audrey, I telephoned to his chambers an hour ago and he has gone—he had gone then. He left his servants to take the steamer in the morning and he himself went direct from here to the Dover station and got the early Channel boat and the through express for Paris. He will catch the P. & O. at Marseilles—he is well on his way now. And, Audrey, remember, he did that for you."

She almost fell and he caught her and carried her to that same big chair where the rajah had sat. But she did not faint, she held herself straight in the seat and stared upward with a wide horror in her tear-stricken eyes.

"I felt sure that you were going to meet him," he said gently, after a little, "and so I sat waiting here. There is no need for me to say any more just now. Life is long and we do outlive much. Try to take that comfort to your heart in this bitter hour—we do outlive much. You will outlive this if you but give yourself time. Tomorrow you will take the boy and go down to the country. For six months you will hear nothing of me. At the end of that time I shall come back, and I shall come to you and tell you the story that I told him tonight. Six months is a long time, and it may have a meaning to you then. It may have a new meaning to me. The dead rise again sometimes. Let us hope so, at least—for the boy's sake."

He took her cold hand and pressed it to his lips. She sat there, silent and motionless, staring upward.

"I cannot understand Fate," Richard said, kneeling at her side. "I was ready to give all that I had left—aye, even life itself—sooner than mar a woman's happiness. And then thus it comes to my wife."

Again he took her hand and pressed

it to his lips. But she took no heed of him, sitting there lost in the wreck of her own dreams. Through the velvet window-curtains stole one single long bright shaft of morning light. The night of the eighteenth-nineteenth was over—for them both.



THE MEMORY

By John G. Neihardt

LONG since the ruined town we fled,
And dust heaps mark the spot
Where you and I clasped hands and said,
"My friend, forget me not."

The shout of War was loud at heel,
The foeman pressed behind;
Then you and I turned round with steel
To meet the Future—blind!

I do not know what foes we fought
Nor when we gained release;
I only know with pain we bought
The ultra-stellar Peace.

I touch your hand—old sorrows wake,
Like smoke the long night lifts;
And O, the faint far bugles make
Weird music through the rifts!



DARK DAYS

PENFIELD—Did that fellow who wrote the book telling how to live on fifteen cents a day ever try it himself?

MERRITT—He had to before his book began to sell.

LES HARICOTS DE PITALUGUE

Par Paul Arène

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PEUT-ÊTRE voudriez-vous savoir ce qu'était Pitalugue, et pourquoi il avait adopté, en fait de haricots, cet étrange procédé de culture.

Pitalugue était philosophe, un vrai philosophe de campagne, prenant le temps comme il vient et le soleil comme il se lève, arrangeant tant bien que mal, à force d'esprit, une existence chaque jour désorganisée par ses vices, et dépensant à vivre d'expédients au village plus d'efforts et d'ingéniosité que tant d'autres à faire fortune dans la grande ville.

Songe-fête comme pas un, pour une partie de bastidon. Pitalugue laisse en l'air fenaïson et vendange; Pitalugue pêche, Pitalugue chasse; Pitalugue a un chien qu'il appelle Brutus, un furet gîte en son grenier, et dans l'écurie, au-dessus de la crèche parfois vide, l'œil stupéfait d'un bourriquet peut contem-

pler les évolutions et les saluts d'une grosse chouette en cage.

Le pire de tout, c'est que Pitalugue est joueur; mais là jouer comme les cartes, joueur à jouer enfant et femme, joueur, disent les gens, à tailler une partie de vendôme, sous six pieds d'eau, en plein hiver, quand la Durance charrie.

C'est pour cela que Pitalugue, jadis à son aise, se trouve maintenant gêné. La récolte est mangée d'avance. Les terres sont entamées par l'usure, et quelles scènes quand il rentre un peu gris et la poche vide dans sa maisonnette du Portail-des-Chiens! Quels remords aussi; car, au fond, Pitalugue a bon cœur. Mais ni scènes ni remords ne peuvent rien contre les cartes; Pitalugue jure chaque soir qu'il ne jouera plus, et chaque matin il rejoue. Ainsi, aujourd'hui, il s'était levé, ce brave Pitalugue, avec les meilleures intentions du monde. Au petit jour et les coqs chantant encore, il était devant sa porte en train de charger sur l'âne un sac de haricots. Et quels haricots! de vrais haricots de semence, émaillés, lourds comme des balles, ronds et blancs comme des œufs de pigeon.

— Emploie-les bien et ménage-les, disait la Zoun en donnant un coup de main, tu sais que ce sont nos derniers.
— Cette fois, Zoun, le diable me brûle si tu n'es pas contente!... A ce soir!... *Arri!* bourriquet.

Et Pitalugue était parti, vertueux, derrière son âne.

Par malheur, aux portes de la ville, il rencontre le perruquier Fra qui s'en revenait les yeux rouges, ayant passé sa nuit à battre les cartes dans une ferme.

— Tu rentres bien tard, Fra?

— Tu sors bien matin, Pitalugue?

— Le fait est qu'il ne passe pas un chat.

— Ce serait peut-être l'occasion d'en tailler une.

— Pas pour un million, Fra!

— Voyons, rien qu'une petite, Pitalugue?

— Et mes haricots?

— Tes haricots attendront.

L'infortuné Pitalugue résista d'abord, puis se laissa tenter. Fra sortit les

cartes. On en tailla une, on en tailla deux, et les haricots attendirent.

Bref! l'alouette montait des blés, et les premiers rayons coloraient en rose la petite muraille de pierre sèche sur laquelle les deux joueurs jouaient, assis à califourchon, lorsque Pitalugue, retournant ses poches, s'aperçut qu'il avait tout perdu.

— Cinq francs sur parole, dit Fra.

— Cinq francs, ça va! répondit Pitalugue.

Les cartes tournèrent et Pitalugue perdit.

— Quitte ou double?

— Quitte ou double!

Pitalugue perdit encore.

— Maintenant, le tout contre ta semence.

Pitalugue accepta, il était fou, ses mains tremblaient.

— Non! grommelait-il en donnant, je ne perdrai pas cette fois, les cartes ne seraient pas justes.

Il perdit pourtant; et l'heureux Fra, chargeant le sac d'un tour de main, lui dit:

— La prochaine fois, Pitalugue, nous jouerons l'âne.

Que faire? Rentrer, tout avouer à la Zoun? Pitalugue n'osa pas, la mesure était comble. Acheter d'autre semence? Le moyen sans un rouge liard!

En emprunter à un ami? Mais c'eût été rendre l'aventure publique. Assuré du moins de la discrétion du barbier (les joueurs ne se vendent pas entre eux), notre homme, après cinq minutes de profond désespoir, prit, comme on l'a vu, son parti en brave:

— Je ne peux pas semer des haricots puisque je n'en ai plus, se dit-il en riant dans sa barbiche, mais je peux faire semblant d'en semer. La Zoun n'y verra que du feu, le hasard est grand, et d'ici à la récolte bien des choses se seront passées.

Bien des choses en effet se passèrent, qui mirent Pertuis en émoi.

D'abord, Pitalugue changea du tout au tout. Talonné par le remords et craignant toujours d'être découvert, il renonça au jeu, déserta l'auberge. Lui, que ses meilleurs amis accusaient de

trouver la terre trop basse, on le vit, dans son petit champ, piocher, gratter, rustiquer à mort.

Jamais haricots mieux soignés que ces haricots qui n'existaient pas.

Tous les soirs, au coucher du soleil, il les arrosait, mesurant sa part à chaque rigole et vidant à fond le réservoir qui, tous les matins, se retrouvait rempli d'eau claire. Le jour, autre chantier: si parfois, sous un soleil trop vif, la terre séchait et faisait croûte, Pitalugue la binait légèrement pour permettre au grain de lever. Souvent aussi, la main armée d'un gant de cuir, il allait à travers les raies, arrachant le chardon cuisant, le seneçon envahisseur et le chiendent tenace.

Ses voisins l'admiraient, sa femme n'y comprenait rien, et M. Cougourdan, radieux, rêvait toutes les nuits de haricots saisis et parlait de s'acheter des lunettes neuves.

Or, au bout d'une quinzaine, de-ci, de-là, tous les haricots de Pertuis se mirent à lever le nez: une pousse blanche d'abord, recourbée en crosse d'évêque, deux feuilles coiffées de la graine et portant encore un fragment de terre soulevée; puis la graine sèche tomba, les deux feuilles découpées en cœur se déplièrent, et bientôt, du Lubéron à la Durance, toute la plaine verdoya.

Seul, le champ de Pitalugue ne bougeait point.

— Pitalugue, que font tes haricots?

Et Pitalugue répondait:

— Ils travaillent sous terre.

Cependant, les haricots de Pertuis s'étant mis à filer, il fallut des soutiens pour leurs tiges fragiles. De tous côtés, dans les *cannières* plantées en tête de chaque champ, les paysans, serpette en main, coupaient des roseaux. Pitalugue coupa des roseaux comme tout le monde. Il en nettoya les nœuds, il les appareilla, puis les disposa en faisceau, quatre par quatre et le sommet noué d'un brin de jonc, de façon à ménager aux haricots, qui bientôt grimperaient dessus, ce qu'il faut d'air et de lumière.

Au bout de la seconde quinzaine, les haricots de Pertuis avaient grimpé, et la plaine, du Lubéron à la Durance, se

trouva couverte d'une infinité de petits pavillons verts.

Seuls, les haricots de Pitalugue ne grimpèrent point. Le champ demeura rouge et sec, attristé encore qu'il était par ses alignements de roseaux jaunes.

La Zoun dit:

— Il me semble, Pitalugue, que nos haricots sont en retard?

— C'est l'espèce! répondit Pitalugue.

Mais, lorsque du Lubéron à la Durance, sur tous les haricots de la plaine, pointèrent des milliers de fleurettes blanches; lorsque ces fleurs se furent changées en autant de cosses appétissantes et cassantes, et qu'on vit que seuls les haricots de Pitalugue ne fleurissaient ni ne grainaient, alors les gens s'en émurent dans la ville.

Les malins, sans bien savoir pourquoi, mais soupçonnant quelque bon tour, commencèrent à gausser et à rire.

Les badauds, en pèlerinage, allèrent contempler le champ maudit.

M. Cougourdan s'inquiéta.

Et la Zoun ne quitta plus la place, accablant la terre et le soleil de protestations indignées.

III

UN soir, tante Dide, mère de la Zoun, belle-mère de Pitalugue par conséquent, et matrone des plus compétentes, se rendit sur les lieux malgré son grand âge, observa, réfléchit et déclara au retour qu'il y avait de la magie noire là-dessous, et que les haricots étaient ensorcelés. Pitalugue abonda dans son sens; et toute la famille jusqu'au quinzième degré de parenté ayant été convoquée à la maisonnette du Portail-des-Chiens, il fut décidé que, vu la gravité des circonstances, le lendemain *on ferait bouillir*.

Tante Dide, qui justement se trouvait être veuve, s'en alla donc rôder chez le terrailleur de la Grand Place, dans le dessein de voler une marmite qui n'eût pas servi, car, pour faire bouillir dans les règles, il faut avant tout une marmite vierge, volée par une veuve. Le terrailleur connaissait l'usage; et, sûr d'être dédommagé à la première oc-

casion, il détourna les yeux pour ne point voir tante Dide lorsqu'elle glissa la marmite sous sa pelisse.

La marmite ainsi obtenue fut solennellement mise sur le feu en présence de tous les Pitalugue mâles et femelles.

Puis tante Dide, l'ayant emplie d'eau, versa dans cette eau, non sans marmotter quelques paroles magiques, tous les vieux clous, toutes les vieilles lames rouillées, toutes les aiguilles sans trou et toutes les épingles sans tête du quartier. Et, quand la soupe de ferraille commença à bouillir, quand les lames, les clous, les aiguilles et les épingles entrèrent en danse, on fut persuadé qu'à chaque tour, chaque pointe, malgré la distance, s'enfonçait dans la chair du jeteur de sorts.

— Ca marche, murmurait tante Dide, encore une brassée de bois, et tout à l'heure le gueusard va venir nous demander grâce.

— Il sera bien reçu, répondait la bande.

Cependant l'astucieux Pitalugue, que tout ceci amusait fort, n'avait pu s'empêcher d'aller en souffler un mot à ses amis de la haute ville, et ce fut, dans tout Pertuis, une grande joie quand le bruit se répandit qu'au Portail-des-Chiens, pour désensorceler les haricots, la tribu des Pitalugue faisait bouillir.

Or, les Pitalugue faisant bouillir, la tradition voulait qu'on envoyât quelqu'un au Portail-des-Chiens pour y être assommé par les Pitalugue.

Ce quelqu'un fut M. Cougourdan! Niez après cela la Providence.

Conduit par son destin, M. Cougourdan eut l'idée fâcheuse de s'arrêter devant la boutique du perruquier Fra. Il venait précisément de rencontrer Pitalugue plus gai qu'à l'ordinaire et tout épanoui de l'aventure.

— As-tu vu ce Pitalugue, quel air content il a?

— Mettez-vous à sa place, monsieur Cougourdan, avec ce qui lui arrive?

— Il a donc gagné?

— Mieux que cela, monsieur Cougourdan.

— Hérité, peut-être?

— Mieux encore! Il a, en recarrelant sa cave, trouvé mille écus de six livres dans un bas.

— Mille écus, sartibois! et mon billet, qui justement tombe ce matin.

— Pitalugue descend chez lui, monsieur Cougourdan. Rattrapez-le avant qu'il ait tout joué ou tout bu; et, si vous voulez suivre un bon conseil, courez vite.

Au Portail-des-Chiens, la marmite bouillait toujours et l'impatience était à son comble, lorsque Cadet, qu'on avait posté en sentinelle, vint tout courant annoncer qu'un vieux monsieur à lunettes d'or, porteur d'un papier qui paraissait être un papier timbré, tournait le coin de la rue.

— M. Cougourdan! s'écria la Zoun, il se trouvait là précisément quand nous semâmes les haricots.

— C'est lui le sorcier, je m'en doutais, reprit tante Dide. Allons, les enfants, tous en place, et pas un coup de bâton de perdu!

Silencieusement, les quinze Pitalugue mâles se rangèrent le long des murs, armés chacun d'une forte trique.

Quelle émotion dans la chambre! On n'entendait que les glouglous pressés de l'eau, le cliquetis de la ferraille, et bientôt le bruit des souliers de M. Cougourdan, sonnant sur l'escalier de bois.

Ce fut une mémorable dégelée; les farceurs de Pertuis eurent pour longtemps de quoi rire.

M. Cougourdan, homme discret, ne se plaignit pas.

Quant à Pitalugue, ayant retrouvé le soir, dans un coin de la chambre, son billet de cent écus perdu par M. Cougourdan dans la bagarre, il en fit une allumette pour sa pipe et dit à Zoun d'un ton pénétré:

— Vois-tu, Zoun, les anciens n'avaient pas tort! Bonne semence n'est jamais perdue, et la terre rend toujours au centuple les bonnes manières qu'on lui fait.

Nobles et philosophiques paroles qui seront, s'il plaît au lecteur, la morale de cette histoire!

ALL ABOUT A PUNCH BOWL

By Thomas L. Masson

“**M**RS. BILTER telephoned over today and wanted to borrow our punch bowl,” said Mrs. Peterby at the breakfast-table.

“I hope you didn’t let them have it,” said Peterby.

The bowl had been hand-painted by his wife when she was a girl and was about the only thing that had escaped the ravages of ten years of married life. Peterby valued it, not only on account of the charmed life it had led, but because it was a kind of symbol of early sentiment.

“I had to,” said Mrs. Peterby. “They’re going to send over for it tomorrow. Mrs. Bilter asked me if I minded and said she’d take the very best care of it.”

“And you were weak enough to let her have it. Why didn’t you come right out and say frankly that I didn’t want to let it go out of the house?”

“My dear, I couldn’t. Mrs. Bilter is such a nice woman, and I wouldn’t make her feel uncomfortable for anything. I told her I felt complimented to think she asked me.”

“Um. She’s never seen that bowl, has she? No. Well, if she had she would know enough not to ask for it.”

Peterby started off to business, considerably disturbed by the thought of what might happen to that punch bowl. While reading his paper a man leaned over him. It was Bilter.

“Awfully good of you to lend us that punch bowl. Told my wife it was an imposition, but she said she thought she knew you well enough.”

“Oh, that’s all right,” said Peterby,

with forced enthusiasm. “Glad to let you have it.”

“We could have gotten one from the Bulsiners next door,” said Bilter, “but theirs was such a handsome one—I mean all cut glass, you know, and frightfully costly, and—”

He stopped suddenly, feeling that he was putting his foot into it.

“Yours isn’t an heirloom, is it?” he asked.

“Well, not exactly,” said Peterby. “My wife painted it when she was a girl, and of course we value it,” he continued, in his altogether too honest, manly way. “But don’t let that worry you,” he hastened to explain. “It’s all right.”

“If I had known that,” said Bilter, disconcerted, “I wouldn’t have thought of borrowing it. You see I could get one for eight or ten dollars, but it seemed foolish for just one night. At the same time, I—”

Peterby smiled reassuringly. It was plainly his duty to put his friend at ease. “Now old fellow,” he said, “don’t think of doing such a thing. It’s all right. Only too glad to let you have it. Why, we both consider it a great compliment to think you knew us well enough to ask us.”

All that day, however, the thought of that punch bowl disturbed him; and especially the fact that in case anything should possibly happen to it it would be impossible for his friend to recover from the loss, for of course, a punch bowl like that was not to be replaced with money.

So on his way home Peterby stepped into a china store and bought a new punch bowl for eight dollars.

"Here," he said to his wife, lugging it into the room, "is a punch bowl I bought to loan to the Bilters. They'll never know the difference."

"What did you do that for?"

"I did it to save our bowl, in case anything should happen to it. I value that bowl more than anything else we have. It may seem extravagant to pay eight dollars, but it's really in the nature of an insurance. Besides, we have this bowl, which we can always lend in place of the other. You send it over to the Bilters. They'll never know. Bilter won't notice it. He's never seen our bowl."

"Well," said Mrs. Peterby, plainly relieved, "perhaps it is worth eight dollars not to have any anxiety about my bowl."

At this moment the telephone-bell rang. It was the voice of Bilter.

"This you, Peterby? Well, I've been thinking it over about that bowl, and we're not going to borrow it."

"Why not?"

"I don't want to run the risk."

This time it was Peterby's turn.

"Now look here, old chap," he said, "I was afraid that I'd conveyed a wrong impression about that bowl. You must take it."

"No, I'm much obliged, just the same, but today I bought one myself. We have to have one anyway."

Peterby was getting more indignant.

"I don't care," he replied, "if you did. It was a shame for you to do it, but never mind. If you don't take this bowl of mine now, even though you have one of your own, I'll never forgive you. You've simply got to do it."

"But—"

"I'll send it over. You use it. That'll be the only thing to convince me that you are not offended at what I said."

Bilter's voice softened.

"Well, old man," he replied, "of course, if you feel that way about it, I'll use your bowl."

"That's right. I'll send it over tomorrow. And be sure you use it."

Two mornings after that, as Peterby

was reading his paper, again a tall form stood over him—Bilter.

"Old chap, I've got some bad news. That punch bowl—"

Peterby looked up hastily in consternation.

"You don't mean to tell me—"

"Yes. Busted. What I wanted to know is how much did it cost you?"

Peterby shook his head.

"How do I know?" he said.

"But," said Bilter triumphantly, "you do. You paid eight dollars for it, didn't you? That's what I paid for mine."

"What do you mean?"

"Now old chap, don't get mad. When that bowl of yours came, I noticed that it was exactly like mine. Indeed, we must have got it at the same store at different times of the day. Then it dawned on me just what you had done. Not wishing to risk your bowl, you'd bought one to lend to me. I, on my part, after I had learned the value of yours, did the same thing. You wanted to put me at my ease, so you insisted on sending your bowl over, though, of course, you naturally sent the one you bought. Now it's been busted, so I owe you eight dollars."

Peterby shook his head doubtfully as he took the money.

"It's too much for me," he said, "but if you say it's all right and are willing to forgive me for the little deception, I shall only be too glad to forget the whole affair."

"Certainly. I understand it perfectly and I've no doubt that I would have done exactly the same thing in your place."

Thereupon they both clasped hands. That night, however, Bilter shook his head disconsolately as he said to his wife:

"Well, I had to lie to Peterby today about that punch bowl. I didn't want him to spend any money on my account, you see, so I told him that bowl of his was busted, which gave me the opportunity to pay him back the eight dollars he spent on it. So now we're square."

"Yes. And we have two useless

punch bowls on hand at a cost of sixteen dollars," groaned Mrs. Bilter.

"Which teaches us hereafter never to borrow from our neighbors."

Mrs. Bilter regarded her husband sternly.

"Not at all," she replied. "What it actually teaches us is that when we borrow from our neighbors, to stick to it and let them do the worrying. That's the real moral, my dear."



THE PRIESTESS

By Aloysius Coll

I WAS a desert bleak and gray
 Where sacrificial flowers lay
 On the ash of their incense, dead;
 But when you came and laid your hand
 On the burning altar of the sand,
 A poppy raised her head!

I was a bird with a silent throat
 That could not wind a single note
 From the trumpet of the Spring;
 But when you breathed upon the wind,
 In silver lyrics thrice refined
 My heart began to sing!

I was a bud in the dungeon-keep
 Of a calyx and the chains of sleep
 That bound each petal sweet;
 But when you passed in the morning sun,
 The leaves unfolded, one by one,
 And blossomed at your feet!

I was a jewel hidden away
 In a gloomy crypt of rock and clay,
 With every fire at rest,
 Until you took me to your heart,
 And kindled Love and Joy and Art
 To shine upon your breast!



"WERE you skating today?"
 "No—swimming."

A SURPRISE IN PLASTER

By Johnson Morton

ALTHOUGH Marian's had always been the dissenting voice in the family concert that acclaimed Uncle Jeremiah a victim of circumstances who had never received his dues from life, she was, at the present moment, inclined to modify her opinion enough to admit that, at least, he had had far less than his share of proper discipline! It is not, under any circumstances, a soothing process to kneel on a dusty floor and extract from a cobwebby cupboard articles euphemistically called "ornaments" in the Black Walnut Period that gave them birth. And when this service is performed under the merciless supervision of a smiling old gentleman in a gray shawl, who lolls in an easy-chair, refreshing himself with raspberry-shrub and allowing nothing to escape his notice and his discussion, a more restrained nature than Marian's might well be pardoned an outburst.

"Put back that onyx greyhound, my dear," Uncle Jeremiah was saying; "I have decided that, on the whole, it is too valuable a gift for Mrs. Drigges, as I suddenly seem to remember that, during your poor aunt's last illness, her calls of inquiry were not frequent. I shall make other arrangements later on."

Marian looked up at him. The smooch of dust across her forehead could not hide the light of combat in her eye. "Oh, Uncle Jerry, it's as heavy as lead; don't make me lift it again. Let the woman have the thing: it will do for an anchor for old Drigges's boat, if worse comes to worst."

Uncle Jerry sighed gently behind his constant smile of good-humor.

"There you go again, my dear, opposing your judgment to mine. Anchor, indeed! Why, that dog is a work of *art*, far too handsome for people in the Drigges's circumstances. I shouldn't be surprised if it turned out to be a *museum-piece*, and I mean to have it examined by an expert, by-and-bye!"

"But, Uncle Jerry, you talk as if you had all the time in the world." Marian turned from the cupboard to lean her head against a packing-case. "Don't you see that we must work as quickly as we can? The house isn't yours, if the things are. We've used up a week already and we are here only by courtesy—by *sufferance*. Really, it's not decent; it's not fair to the Brookfields. I am positively ashamed of staying so much longer than is necessary; and," she added in a pungent afterthought, "I think that you *ought* to be!"

But, as usual, rebuke failed to impress the smooth surface of Uncle Jeremiah's serenity. It returned, in the fashion of a boomerang, straight to the sender. "You are using language, my dear," he sighed, "that in my day would have been thought unbecoming a gentlewoman. But I make allowance for your lack of sentiment, because you cannot understand that the sight of my dear wife's treasures brings back a flood of tender memories. The distribution of these precious souvenirs is to me a sacred task to be achieved with infinite thought and pains. As to the Brookfields, your suggestion *hurts* me, Marian, though I am far from agreeing with you in crediting my step-son and step-grandson with such utter lack of delicacy. *They* will understand, with

every right-thinking person, that I must be untrammelled and uninterrupted in my devoted labors. *They* will respect my suffering and my toil, for certainly the situation is one of unique pathos."

"Unique pathos"! To stifle the laugh that struggled against her lips Marian flung herself afresh upon her task, and drew forth in triumph from the cupboard an inkstand shaped like a horse's hoof, a model in malachite of the Leaning Tower of Pisa and a framed copy of the Declaration of Independence, shaded by an uncanny pen into a semblance of our first President.

However one might doubt its pathos, the unique quality of the situation was not to be denied. Uncle Jeremiah Dreemer, only three short years ago a bridegroom of sixty-two, had renounced bachelor joys for the legal companionship of the Widow Brookfield, nearly a decade his senior. The lady, already the possessor of an elderly son and several grandchildren, was, because she occupied with every show of comfort a commodious house in an inland town, supposed to be of proper affluence. But her sudden death a few months before had disclosed the painful fact that her income had been in the form of an annuity. So, much to his family's regret, Uncle Jeremiah was found to be, with the exception of an added few hundreds from his wife's savings, in much the same financial situation as before his marriage: that precarious one common to poor gentlemen of expensive tastes and little energy.

But, although the house itself was the property of the late lady's son, Mr. Melancthon Brookfield, its furnishings had been left as an especial legacy to her second husband; and, by one of those ironical pleasantries that fate loves to perpetrate, it had fallen to the lot of Marian Dreemer, the least sentimental and the most executive of his nieces, to assist her uncle in what he was pleased to call the "pious task" of distributing his acquired *penates*. Marian's first suggestion, that he should

call in an auctioneer and turn his possessions into money while yet the town's interest was warm, had been dismissed at once as vulgar. No; he preferred, after a few personal reservations, to bestow the rest of his goods upon neighbors and friends to whom they should have value from the point of view of sentiment.

In itself this was a laudable intent, but, alas! decision was not numbered among Uncle Jeremiah's virtues, and now after a week's effort Marian found herself, like Penelope, no nearer the end than the beginning of her garment. Many articles, packed and labeled, encumbered the floor of every room; but Uncle Jerry's mood was sure to shift when the point of sending them away was reached. He would weigh critically from day to day the conduct of each potential beneficiary, always, as in the case of Mrs. Drigges, finding it unworthy of his generosity, and would change and re-change the labels in futile sequence. Small wonder, then, that Marian should turn her back upon him and devote herself fiercely to the clearing out of the cupboard. Suddenly, when the last dust-laden article was hauled forth to crown the heap beside her, she turned at the sound of her uncle's voice.

"Gently; gently, my dear," it was saying. "Do not work so hurriedly. You have allowed me to lose track while I was contemplating this interesting picture"—he held the Declaration of Independence in his hand—"and I want you to stop everything and make a note that it is to be given to my step-grandson, the Rev. Robert Brookfield. You will add also to his list—I must not tax my memory further—the curly-maple set in the bedroom used by his father as a child, and—Marian, again your digressions have well-nigh made me forget one of the most important of my bequests—the bust of his honored grandfather that adorns the bookcase in the hall! It is the work, I am given to understand, of a famous sculptor whose name has slipped my mind; but, beyond any artistic consideration, I am sure that

the young man will regard it as a sacred and much prized memento of the past. Which reminds me"—Uncle Jeremiah, having refreshed again his smiling lips with a swallow of raspberry-shrub, produced from his pocket a slip of yellow paper—"I have neglected to inform you that Robert Brookfield himself may be here at any moment. I received this telegram while you were out this noon, in answer to a letter that I sent him yesterday. Not that I mean to criticize your efforts, my dear, for they are well meant; but, all along, I have felt the need of masculine judgment to augment my own, and I must say that I consider my step-grandson's assent to my invitation *most* polite."

In spite of herself Marian started. She felt the color surge to her cheeks. The situation lost of a sudden its humor in its awkwardness. "Really," she cried, "I think it was quite unnecessary. What on earth will you do with him? You should have consulted me, Uncle Jerry." Then, as her annoyance mounted, she added, "Robert Brookfield of *all* persons!"

Over the old man's face the smile deepened to slyness. He was manifestly pleased, for he rubbed his hands together and even drew down the lid of an eye!

"Yes, my dear," he chuckled. "I should have said that he was *the* person, for I seem to remember that last Winter—"

"Oh, hush, Uncle Jerry; *please* hush," Marian's voice began in protest. But she stopped abruptly, for at that very instant the door swung wide, thrown open without demeaning preliminaries by the stout, red and democratic arm of Mrs. Flanders, the neighbor at present "accommodating" in the kitchen; and past her generous bulk a tall young man in clergyman's dress walked into the room.

II

To find yourself unexpectedly under the same roof-tree, and that a low-branching one, with a man who has

twice asked you to be his wife and whose petition you have as many times refused, is a situation of a complexity that should appeal only to a pronounced coquette. That she was a coquette at all, Marian Dreemer would have denied with indignation; indeed, at this moment, she was more inclined to consider herself a martyr! It was quite in keeping with Robert Brookfield's method that he should respond at once to Uncle Jeremiah's bidding and ignore, utterly, the possibilities of the present complication, which might well have been foreseen by a man of even greater obtuseness. Yes, he was indisputably a direct and single-minded person who followed the obvious—one might almost say the parochial—and did always what was expected of him. But, even while she formulated the phrase, Marian was shamefully aware that it produced the sum of his disadvantage in her eyes! Otherwise he had everything to recommend him: youth, good looks, charm, promise and character. She felt almost ashamed that the lack of what was really an unessential should weigh down the balance of all these perfections and yet, somehow, the objection stood! In a word, she found herself turning aside from a man whom she already more than liked, simply because he seemed not to understand the mental language that she herself spoke so glibly, and wishing all the while that, even in some small way, he could let her see that he possessed the power of *surprising her!*

But when she met him at the door the next morning, Marian's mood was less analytical. Contrary to her expectation Brookfield had declined the offer of a room in the house and had passed the night at the hotel; but his advice, given to Uncle Jeremiah during the previous evening, had produced an unprecedented result. Already a wagon-load of boxes had left the back door and in consequence a refreshing emptiness was observable in the dining-room!

"How *did* you manage it?" she laughed as she led the way upstairs.

Brookfield was regarding her with questioning eyes.

"Manage what?" he asked; "I don't understand."

Marian groaned inwardly. Of course he wouldn't. She shook her head, suppressing in that act a strong inclination to shake, instead, the Reverend Robert himself!

"Don't look so innocent when you know perfectly well that you've accomplished in an hour what I've failed to do in a week! I refer to the separation of Uncle Jeremiah from a portion of his belongings," she explained; "your methods last night were effective. Really, I think that you've mistaken your career. You ought to be a diplomat instead of a clergyman!"

Brookfield turned suddenly at the top of the stair.

"Would you like me better if I were?" he began.

But Marian had taken fright. She slipped past him into the upper hall and chose to ignore his question. "We haven't time to talk," she spoke hurriedly, "for there's still another flight before us. Our investigations to be thorough must begin with the attic, and chattels marked with your name are distributed over the entire house. You are now viewing your first legacy," she went on a moment later as they bowed their heads under the rafters, "a cradle that once contained your great-grandfather. Think of that for a test of capacity! Next comes this hair-trunk, which your grandmother carried on her wedding journey. She had but one, because Uncle Jeremiah, you will remember, succumbed to an attack of measles when the second would have been in order! Then this largest spinning-wheel, a far from convenient size, we must admit, is to be yours; also that warming-pan without its handle, and *one* of the fire-buckets. For some occult reason its mate has been assigned to me; but if you are too tender-hearted to allow the divorce of the happy pair, I might be willing to renounce my claim!"

"Or I *mine*," hazarded Brookfield.

"Buckets or people, I believe in marriage, you know!"

But Marian, by this time half-way down the narrow stairs, hastened again to turn the conversation to the safer topics of treasures of the floor below. "You are now on the eve of acquiring a collection of objects too varied to enumerate." Already she was opening door after door. "Just glance at the tags and govern yourself accordingly. But there's a certain curly maple bedroom set that, if you care to possess, I strongly advise your seizure at once. It has been bestowed and withdrawn a dozen times already—the candidates including the gardener, Ryan, Mrs. Flanders, temporarily at the helm of our kitchen, and—myself."

Brookfield laughed, but he did not speak again until some time after they had reached the lower hall. Then he looked up suddenly from the sofa where he sat with a book in hand revising with evident care the memoranda that he had taken during his tour of the house.

"By George," he cried, "I don't really know what to do with these things! They are all so—so *domestic*, that they seem to take for granted the possession of a house, a wife and a family. What's your Uncle Jerry's idea in adorning a poor bachelor, who lives in two rooms and gets his meals at a club, with all the insignia of an establishment? Can't you," he hesitated an instant, "can't *you* help me out?"

To her dismay Marian felt the color rise in her cheeks.

"Indeed, I can't," she returned somewhat ungraciously. Then as she lifted her eyes she met unexpectedly the non-committal gaze of a pair of plaster eyes confronting her from the top of the bookcase. She twisted a sudden whimsical thought to her advantage, and nodded her head gaily. "But there's somebody who can," she cried. "See! Your grandfather or the presentment of him! I should never have forgiven myself had I forgotten the *pièce de résistance* among Uncle Jerry's gifts. It is that—shall

we call it—Animated Bust; yours by express command! Why should it not supply the touch of domesticity that your life seems to lack?"

But Brookfield, meeting in his turn the ancestral gaze, seemed to fall under its spell. He passed by Marian's question to indulge in an exclamation of his own.

"Impossible!" he cried. "This is too bad of Uncle Jerry! It's clearly the beginning of the end; the first sign of mental weakening that I've seen the old gentleman display. Why, he knows perfectly well that I'm the last person on earth who ought to be inflicted with the plaster cast! But he's forgotten, you see! And for years I've been guarding, like a guilty secret, the fact that I am the wretched possessor of the original of the cast, my dear Miss Dreemer; an original in enduring, nay, worse—*indestructible marble*! It was a present to my grandmother—so the legend runs—a tribute of gratitude made and bestowed by an expatriated American lady living in Rome. She was at once unfortunate and artistic, a not unusual combination, by the way, and I believe that my grandmother saved her from eviction. It was a mistake, but I'm sure grandmother paid the penalty nobly. The sculptress had evidently steeped herself, you will observe, in Greek tradition, which comforted but ill with my grandfather's type of beauty, unmistakably of New England. That *peplum*, for instance, and that neck furnish an admirable example of the meeting of extremes; or, to be frank, they don't meet—do they?—for more of grandfather's chest is exposed than persons of delicate sensibilities might desire! Oh, I grant you it's bad enough in plaster, but you should see it in marble." Brookfield shook his head sadly. "Marble of the spotted variety, polished like a mirror and yet, despite its brilliancy, carrying a remorseless suggestion of death and the tomb!"

Marian looked up at him with a dawning sense of surprise.

"Really," she began, "I never heard you talk like this before! But, do you

know, I rather like it. It's vastly becoming, and the theme is certainly inspiring."

Brookfield turned; in another man his smile would have been mischievous.

"Perhaps I've caught the manner from you," he said. "We can't help copying what we admire!"

"All of which is irrelevant and avoids the point of issue. Don't lose track of that," Marian interrupted severely. "The question to be decided is, what do you mean to do with the plaster cast? I believe, myself, that you will shirk your duty and repudiate it!"

Brookfield was silent for a moment, and when he spoke again it was with an air of decision.

"No; of course that would naturally be my first thought. But it wouldn't help matters to force Uncle Jerry to a series of fresh decisions in the course of which it is more than likely that you'd acquire the bust yourself! I couldn't be as cruel as that. Now there is a way, a *drastic* one, that I'm not equal to managing alone; I wonder if you feel inclined to help me? Listen." He took his watch from his pocket, cast an apprehensive eye at the library-door and lowered his voice.

"It is half-past ten o'clock. I am going to the village on an errand. I shall come back in an hour, and if on my return I do not find the bust in its accustomed place, *I shall ask no questions!* More than that, I pledge myself to manage Uncle Jerry if he should become troublesome. Do I make myself clear?"

Marian had caught the infection of the moment. Though she held her lips in serious line her eyes danced adventurously.

"Perfectly; I quite comprehend." Then yielding to an impulse she held out her hand. "Come," she said, "let us ratify our partnership in crime!"

III

At the open window of her bedroom Marian sat waiting. Before her, against its background of hills veiled

in October haze, lay the dismantled garden, in the midst of which a curling line of smoke soared above a bonfire. Presently around the corner of the house appeared the bent figure of old Ryan, the gardener. Marian leaned forward eagerly, then settled herself in her chair again, for she saw with satisfaction that he bore in his arms the *plaster cast!* To achieve this consummation had not been easy. Summoned to the hall immediately after Brookfield's departure, old Ryan had demurred loudly to her request.

"Is it askin' me to desthroy that ilegant old gintleman ye are, Miss Marian?" he had protested. "Faith, an' it's not meself that will be afther takin' the burthen on me sowl!"

"Nonsense, Ryan; the bust is of no use. See how soiled it is! We do not care for it any longer and it's not the sort of thing that can be given away. So do as I tell you; take it out-of-doors and break it in pieces; then you must bury the remains or, better still, burn them in your bonfire."

Ryan's attitude was still obdurate.

"Bury and burn is it ye're saying? Sure, Miss Marian, 'twould be a crime, I'm thinkin'! The saints preserve us if he came to life in me hands! 'Tis a way the images have, I've heard tell, in the ould cuntry. Sure it's like a murder ye're askin'! And it was not until, in desperation, Marian fell back on Brookfield's authority that the old man yielded and proceeded to lay still reluctant hands on the bust.

"If it's the pastor that's after wishin' it, Miss Marian," he conceded, "I'll be takin' me chance. For thim priests," he added in an awestruck whisper, "is grand and eddicated people, ma'am, and has a knowledge of strange things."

Even now, as Marian watched him cross the lawn, she smiled at the old man's air of mystery. He looked around him cautiously, then depositing his burden with care near the bonfire, he waved his hand in the direction of the kitchen. Obedient to the signal Mrs. Flanders strode ponderously into view: a formidable presence hers, with skirts girt high about the hips and an

axe held, musket-fashion, over a shoulder. She likewise deposited her burden and, arms akimbo, indulged in a moment's conversation with Ryan. Then, as Marian watched, she turned away and threw her apron over her head, while Ryan, flinging off his coat, stood in the bravery of a red flannel shirt, and with a sweep that recalled the prowess of a vanished youth, raised the axe on high. Marian leaned forward: she saw the weapon flash in the sunlight, but to her surprise it descended not with cleaving blow on the shining bald head, but harmlessly to the soft earth! Ryan's face, as he stared foolishly about him, was open-mouthed with consternation; but over the set features of the bust a leering smile of triumph seemed to rise! For a long moment the baffled executioner stood scratching his head doubtfully. Then, picking up his coat, he started to walk away: but Marian's voice stopped him.

"Nonsense, Ryan," she called; "if you can't do it you'd better let Mrs. Flanders try!"

It was the happiest of appeals. The man in him rose to indignation at the very hint of woman's aid. He flung away his coat; he straightened himself; he spat upon his hard old hands for firmer hold. Then, swinging the axe valiantly aloft, he brought it down, broadside, in a blow that reduced forever the bust of Grandfather Brookfield to a heap of unrecognizable fragments.

Marian laughed softly to herself as she closed the window. The episode had been amusing. She felt her spirits rise in consequence, and back of her gaiety was an unwonted sense of satisfaction that it was to Brookfield she owed the experience.

"He is certainly developing a pretty sense of humor that I shouldn't have suspected," she found herself thinking an instant later as the door-bell rang. "There, he's back again already; I'll go and let him in myself, while those two are concealing the evidences of our crime." She felt the temptation of an especial indulgence. "Really, I'm half inclined to be *nice* to him this afternoon!"

But it was not Brookfield who stood on the step when Marian flung wide the door. A bantering word stopped at her lips as she found herself confronting a stout and elderly figure in Sunday black. Behind it, like the semi-circle of a Greek chorus, ranged a group of supporters similarly clad. It needed, indeed, a sharp glance of scrutiny to recognize in the severe central figure the genial personality of Captain Drigges—purveyor of fish—whose usual habiliments were the easy ones of his calling. Once within the hall he refused a chair, and stood, with his companions about him, hat in hand.

"We are present this time in an official capacity," he began, "and our business is with the Reverend Mr. Robert Brookfield who, we are given to understand, is sojourning temporarily in our midst."

"I'm sorry to say that Mr. Brookfield is not here at present. He's gone to the village, but I expect him back soon—" Marian started to explain.

Mr. Drigges interrupted her.

"That is unfortunate—most unfortunate, as our time, owing—er—to our various professional engagements—is limited."

"Perhaps you would like to see my uncle, Mr. Dreemer?" she suggested.

But Mr. Drigges had held ocular consultation with his chorus. It evidently approved his intention.

"No; we will not disturb your relative," he went on, "who, we understand, is in delicate health; but we find no objection—though technically the proceeding may be a trifle irregular—to leaving a sort of official message with you, pending Mr. Brookfield's return."

Marian gave her assent smilingly.

"We constitute," Mr. Drigges's hand swept in his bowing satellites, "a committee of five appointed by the Jenks Memorial Library of the town of Ashbrun to wait upon the Reverend Robert Brookfield and proffer a request voted at our meeting last night. We hope that he will be willing to present us, for the adornment of our rooms, that bust of his distinguished grandfather, once a respected president of

our town, which, even during my infrequent visits to this part of the house, I recall as occupying always an honored position on that bookcase."

He turned as if to bow in the direction of the bust; but stopped suddenly. Four other pairs of eyes followed the gaze of his, only to rest, alas! on an empty space; and, in that dramatic instant, Marian's heart grew cold.

Of course it was altogether ridiculous! Left to herself, she would have dismissed the matter in a fit of laughter; but with all these fellow-actors in the farce a queer sort of responsibility seemed involved which she felt unable to meet. Indeed she realized, for the first time, the utter isolation of a solitary sense of humor! The committee of five had none, that was patent at a glance; there was none in the mental composition of Uncle Jeremiah who, even now, was stirring overhead in a fashion that she knew presaged an imminent appearance, and at this crucial moment she found herself distrusting the quality of which Robert Brookfield only that morning had given such fair promise. No; there was no feasible help. What is more, there was no time to lose. She must attack the situation alone and at once. Even in her moment of hesitation she caught sight of Mr. Drigges's astonished face and saw many a question framed there in raised eyebrows and open mouth.

"Oh, the *bust*," she began nervously, "you were asking about the *bust*! Why—you see, the *bust*—"

She stopped abruptly, with a rush of relief, at the sound of a step outside, as grateful to her as ever was the tune of the pipes to Lucknow, and ran to open again the door.

"Here's Mr. Brookfield himself," she cried, "who I'm sure will be glad to tell you all you want to know."

There was no chance for a word of explanation; no opportunity for the exchange of a single illuminating glance. Marian realized that the responsibility fell from her shoulders as she stepped aside and Brookfield came into the hall. She watched him narrowly. How well he carried himself! He greeted Mr.

Drigges like an old friend. He called each of the other four by name and smiled appreciatively as he listened to the story of their mission repeated by the chairman in even more forensic terms than before; and at last he spoke.

"Now for a fizzle of feeble explanation," thought Marian in her corner, but something in Brookfield's tone made her change her mind.

"Your request affects me deeply, Mr. Chairman," he was saying, "and I am sure, to speak for my father as well as for myself, that we shall be delighted to grant it, only this must be done in a way a little different from what you planned, though I trust no less satisfactory. Unfortunately," he cleared his throat and darted at Marian a look of comprehension that brought the color to her face, "unfortunately we have made another disposition of the bust to which you refer. That, however, was only a replica in plaster, but I shall be delighted—and here let me thank Miss Dreemer for allowing me the pleasure of this explanation—to present the original in lasting marble to the Library Association and, in conclusion, let me hope that it will bear out the dictum of that great poet who declared 'a thing of beauty is a joy forever!'"

Uncle Jeremiah, his gray shawl about his shoulders and in his eye a glint of enthusiasm at the prospect of another day's devotion to his "sacred task,"

came cautiously down the stairs. On the lowest step he stopped short as his astonished gaze fell upon the empty top of the bookcase.

"Children, children," he called anxiously. "Where are you? Come and help me at once. Something strange has happened. I miss the *bust* that ought to be here. What has become of it? I mean the bust of your Grandfather Brookfield!"

It may have been his accent, placed firmly on the possessive pronoun, that colored the faces of the pair with rosy self-consciousness as they came through the library-door; but more likely it was the fact that Uncle Jeremiah showed unmistakable interest in his observation that Marian's hand was in Robert's and that she could not or would not or, at any rate, *did* not take it away!

And Uncle Jeremiah, for once in his life, merged the smaller in the larger issue and forgot all about the bust, as the others had long ago.

A smile of genuine pleasure rolled over his face as he regarded them.

"But I must say I am surprised," he couldn't resist a criticism.

"So am I," said Robert, standing very erect, as a man in his position should. There was just the right mingling of pride and humility in his voice.

"But I am probably the *most* surprised of all!" laughed Marian adorably, with her cheek against her lover's sleeve.



SONG OF THE RAIN

By Louise E. Dutton

GOOD-BYE, little girl! May good fortune betide you,
There's the wash of the rain through the half-open door.
An hour of the day I have lingered beside you,
But the hour is done, and you'll see me no more.

The touch of your hand has turned heavy about me,
I weary and chafe at the feel of this place,
So forget or remember, believe me or doubt me,
I'm over the moor with the rain in my face.

MAN PRIMITIVE

By Mary Glascock

THE room was in frightful disarray. I didn't care; I was glad of it. When you have every request in your life smilingly, coldly refused, leaving you no retaliation but thoughts insurgent, you have a right to toss garments to the four corners, and crumple a chiffon waist you have to wear to the very dinner you have refused to go to.

Then, too, in spite of your determination, you'll be forced to sit next the little Beast whom you've decided never, never to speak to again, for he has a most disagreeable habit of proposing between courses. He's done that very thing at the last three dinners, and I've had to eat incessantly to keep from flaring up before the company. My devotion to entrées has almost, even at my age, earned me the reputation of a gourmet. Old Mr. Beaufort—how I loathe his smooth, massaged face, he's sixty if he's a day, and still dances—twits me about it whenever he haggles for a dance. Eating's better than talking to the Beast; it's my only resource. Besides, if I lay my fork down he gropes for my fingers under the table—I hate his touch. He smiles complacently across at the Mater; he knows that he has an ally in her, and, worst of all, I know it too. That is what chills my blood. I'm in a crevasse—deep and dark, polished ice—I can't climb out, and there's no one to help me.

Tonight the dinner's at our house, and I've been placed next to him. I wish I could wring his neck as I can this chiffon sleeve. He looks at me so much—just as if I belonged to him. That proprietary air maddens me. He says he likes to see me flush, that

color's becoming. Genevieve says I show my feelings too plainly, that it's reserve makes one fascinating. Genevieve's had three seasons, and her life has one rule—how to please things masculine. I don't wish to be fascinating.

There's nothing left me but to scribble in my book. The safety-valve for my feelings is to write them down. I feel better when I've spluttered all my venom out in ink—it's safer than your dearest friend.

It's almost like beginning a play, only I'm not clever enough for that. I want to feel and know life myself, from its depths to its heights, and I want to be happy, happy every minute, and when it ends to have happiness just go on—how or where I don't know nor care. This isn't a diary. That's a malicious way of fastening all little things of the day, best forgotten, upon a pin and letting them writhe. No, I like to write my opinions of people, the ones I don't dare tell them; it eases my mind.

Dramatis Personæ:

The Mater—

She is always first because she is the pivot upon which we all turn. Mrs. Vernon has a commanding presence, they say; Mrs. Vernon has a commanding mind, I know. She rules us all ironly, even Daddy. I admire her hugely; she gets everything her own way, and it's a large way. She never blusters, but calmly tells you to do a thing, to think one way, and you obey; you never dare an objection. What a general the Mater would make! She could out-general them all. Her will and self-control could rule the world. Why has she set her heart upon the

Beast? He's—I'll let him come later when I've a whole clean page for him; it takes space to do him up. People of course love their mothers; you have to, but—I'm not quite sure what love is.

Daddy—

Well, Daddy is just Daddy, bless him. If we could only have more of his time! But his nose is buried in law books and he is in evidence only as the cashier of the family. I'm sure—there's always a queer quickening of my heart when his step comes up the stair. I wonder if it's love makes you so queer and fussy inside?

Genevieve—

Genevieve needs a chapter: she's so correct, so as she should be. Genevieve's my elder sister, and is held up as a model. When she's fifty she'll be a replica of the Mater. I can see it coming. When she's stout her small, perfect features will be obliterated. I hope I'll never be blotted out like that. And her repose! Every expression, every emotion has been soaked from her face and heart. She's not only good form, but form itself. How I'd hate to be like her! Old Beaufort quotes lines to her, gets off Elizabethan odes about her—she is perfect! Good Lord, I mean it all in devotion, deliver us from perfectness. She hasn't an atom of human feeling in her make-up. She can't see why I'm in such a ferment over the little Beast. He has a million, and his people are good—at least he can count back to great-grandfathers and great-grandmothers. That's far enough back for the West. She can't see what more I can wish—in my first season, too—than to carry off the *grand prix*. It isn't prizes I like. I detest walking into the limelight to receive them. I want—what do I want?

My three-cornered problem is as old and commonplace as the world—the girl, the man, and the mother. But when the girl's yourself it isn't the same thing. And that queer, fussy feeling inside is a very delightful feeling. My love of opposition would upset the apple-cart, at any rate.

Genevieve is an "ornament to society." The newspapers put it that way and if it's trite it's right. She reminds me of a piece of bric-à-brac on a high mantel-shelf more than anything else—a priceless piece. She's going to wed an Englishman with a title next Spring; she'll fit in a castle. But what about the tenantry and dependent people I believe they have to look after over there? Imagine Genevieve looking after flannel petticoats for old women, and drains in cottages!

The Beast—

I should think ink would blister paper at bearing his name. He's little, he's young, he's rich and he squints—not much—I'll have to be honest; and he looks at you with red-rimmed eyes half-closed, as if you were a piece of statuary; and he tells you in legato movement, supposed to be very impressive, how you look to him. He knows about clothes and minor poets; he can tell you every screw in an automobile; he adores garage slang—and he plays bridge. Fancy playing bridge all the short, splendid hours of an afternoon after motoring all the late morning hours! I'm sure he lounges in blue silk pajamas—he looks it. Bah! I'm glad Genevieve isn't looking over my shoulder when I write this. I feel that she wouldn't think it quite proper; I'm sure she wouldn't. Mater says there are many things you may think about, but must not mention. I'd like my thoughts to be as clean as my tongue. Think of bridge all afternoon and nights when there's nothing on! He needs the stimulant of chance—no—I believe he calls it intellectual effort. Intellect to play bridge! Besides, they tell me he's lucky in winning. Then he talks bridge at dinners, says I may appreciate it when I'm older—and makes love to me—the Beast!

"Come in, Octave." It's the maid, to fix my gown.

"Olive, are you dressing for dinner?" the Mater called in low, even voice. And I left the Beast full half-a-page short, slammed the book and meekly answered, "Yes, Mater." I wondered

what the Mater would say if I answered, "I'm not coming down." I mumbled it to myself, but went. I rather liked the frills that Octave patted into place. And there's always the anticipation that something might happen. It never does, but each minute holds a possibility.

Then Genevieve knocked; I know its proper cadence. My, she was stunning! I'm not at all good-looking compared to her. I'm glad of it, because I might have it made my duty to go to England, too, and I could never leave Daddy 'cross sea.

Genevieve examined me from slippers to the white wreath in my hair. She nodded and I knew it was all right. Of course it was her duty to remark as she went to the door, "Your color is rather high." With a sigh, "I suppose you can't help it. A little powder for Miss Olive, Octave." She turned to the maid, who took up a puff. When Genevieve was gone, leaving a whiff of white violets after her, I snatched the puff from the maid's hand and threw it to the floor. Octave looked hurt. I tried to soothe her wounded feelings and apologetically stooped to pick up the puff—you might as well have tried to placate a wooden Indian.

Dinner was announced. The table, decked with masses of American Beauties, tall candles, the old silver and very best Venetian glass, that makes me think of bubbles of the sea, was a picture, and I was glad to be a part of it. The Mater presided with an air; she's always regal in purple velvet—looks born to it. If she should tell me, when she sports that purple velvet, that I'd have to accept the Beast, I'm afraid, in my scary little soul, I'd do it. It's only in the pages of my scribbling-book, where no one who runs reads, that I'm brave. Daddy looked worn; he had too many of those tiresome graft cases. Of course the Beast was my partner; I didn't look at him.

"Miss Olive," the soup had passed—generally he doesn't come to the point until before the entrée—"Miss Olive," he repeated, "this is the last time that I shall ask you—"

"What a relief!" I replied. The relief was so genuine that I looked at him.

"To listen to me," he concluded.

"Oh," I exclaimed lamely, and my face grew hot, my color higher than ever, I decided, as I caught Genevieve's disapproving eye.

The fish was to his taste, those slimy little sandabs in buttery papers, and he devoted himself to them. I talked football, the most distasteful topic to him I knew of. I am fond of the game and never miss a match when I can inveigle a chaperon. Mater considers college things quite harmless, and she has a friend who goes in for sports, so I often go. I love the tussle and the fight.

The fish finished, at the usual pause—allowing Hobbs to pour the sauterne—the Beast said, "Olive, I mean to have my answer now. I've arranged with your mother, and I fancy," there was a passing gleam of amusement in his eyes—I almost liked him then—"I fancy you'd better take me. I'm going abroad; it's beastly traveling with only a valet, and you're up on things we ought to see, and—"

"You'll have to travel with your valet," I interrupted scornfully. "I'd make a dreadful traveling companion; I've a blustery temper."

He grinned, yes, grinned as he raised his glass. "I could fix that."

If I could have slapped him! My voice was shaky with rage.

"You'll never have the opportunity." I think I hissed—they do in dime novels when the villain is foiled; anyway, I felt like hissing.

He laughed languidly, lifted his glass and looked meaningly at the Mater, who smiled back. I was furious.

"You're never to speak to me again, never dare." I hurled the words at him.

"It's becoming to you to be excited," he drawled, stopping a full moment to contemplate me. "And I suppose *you* don't have to pay for it with sleepless nights?"

I turned my back on him. That interminable dinner! The talk, the after music, the dragging hours, and then—the Mater.

I did not sleep that night; I never dreamed that I should find the spunk to resist the Mater in the purple velvet, but I did. I never tumbled over before, but when the storm was heaviest things grew black, my head spun round and for a second I lost grip; the pelting words deadened my brain.

It was Daddy caught me in his arms. I fancied he repeated, "Poor child!"

In a daze I heard him say—he had just come into the room—"Leave her to me. I'm going to the mountains tomorrow for two weeks' fishing—a prescription for brain-fag, my dear," he explained to the Mater. "I shall take the child with me. I'm not going to the Country Club, but to an out-of-the-way place that I know of where briefs and complaints were never heard of. I must rest up for the big trial next month."

Could it be true that I was really to go, alone with Daddy—just Daddy and me? Happiness brought that giddiness again and I leaned my head on his broad breast and cried, "Take me with you—don't let them say no."

It was another girl who woke up that late Fall morning and ran out into the field girt by gaunt, ragged peaks. The morning air was crisp—the blessed tang of it! I liked the nip on my cheeks; I loved the crunch of the stubble as I zigzagged to the edge and scared a flock of birds that strung themselves, notes in a song, along the telegraph wires and twittered the theme to me. The heavenly freshness! The blue of sky was deep and clean, no smoke of city browned its purity. My hands were reddening at the knuckles and the tips of my fingers stung. I threw my tam-o'-shanter into the air and huzzahed like a child for joy of it. Best of all, Daddy was striding across the field in his old fishing-suit, his dear eyes bright.

"Isn't it good, Daddy?"

He drew me to him; he always understands without talk, and we went to our simple breakfast. Then I held the reel while he wound a line—my pulse beat to the whirl. Already Daddy looked rested; the crow's feet

in the corner of his eyes were etched lighter. It is such a relaxation to be away from the Mater and Genevieve—I didn't dare ask Daddy if he felt that way. He had compunctions about leaving me.

"It's the river I knew as a boy," he explained. "I must try the old pools. Don't mind if I'm late; it's the first day. I used to fish here when this man's father kept the place, long ago."

Mind! I waved my hand to him, and his broad, straight back disappeared down the trail to the river. There was a long, golden day ahead and I meant to live every minute of it. Our reprieve might be short—telegraph wires stretched, and a telephone—hideous connecting links with everywhere—were at the house. I would make the most of minutes.

Mission grapes clustered, fresh with dew and breath of bloom, on gnarled vines straggling up the hill back of our cottage. Red apples were ripe on boughs that crossed my narrow-paned window, and the road that lost itself in forest of pine and fir beckoned for a tramp. The maples were just turning, the little fine-leaved ones like those of Nikko. There were a thousand things to do. Stretching myself free from the withes of convention was of itself occupation enough.

Mrs. Viles, the ample, motherly mistress of the house, comfortable as her feather-beds, did her own work, and she let me make my bed. It was a queer, lumpy bed that I made, shame to me, but I never made one before; I didn't know it was an art. I was beginning to live, for making beds is a step. I've always longed for every-day things; I've never wanted to be a victor and claim spoils; my aspiration is to live in the heart of things, to be on a level with humanity—no heights for me—they're shivery!

The sunset was delicious; copper and rose barred the sky, a glorified gate. Martha Viles let me set the table; it was good to feel that I was of help. She said that I really was, and in the mountains folks didn't care which side the knife and fork were on. Supper

was lonesome without Daddy. Dark fell quickly, as a drop-curtain falls, shutting out daylight. I had gathered cones under the tall pine by the corral, and I doled them to the fire in the living-room. The evening was cold; I wished Daddy would come. Then I remembered the pools of long ago; I wouldn't have hurried him for a kingdom.

While I sat huddled in a chair, my chin propped in my hands, watching the long red flames shoot from the cones, someone stalked in. The room suddenly seemed filled, and I looked up. I never had seen so tall a man; his head almost touched the low ceiling. A mane of thick hair fell long over his forehead; he tossed it impatiently back and looked at me. His eyes were fine; I saw that, though my eyes traveled fastidiously from the shabby, stout surveyor's boots, into which were tucked corduroy trousers, up to his loose-throated flannel shirt. He picked up a handful of cones and threw them on the fire. The room was a blaze of light. Despite his rough clothing he had a lion-like look, something defiant in the toss of his head, proud, challenging. He looked steadily at me. I shrank into the shadow. He threw a royal measure of cones to the blaze; there was no shadow.

"A little fire is not worth while. Why don't you have a big one or none at all?" he demanded.

"You've wasted all my cones," I replied pettishly.

"There are more under the trees; I will gather a bushel for you tomorrow."

I drew aside to make room for him. He stretched his long legs to the leaping flame.

"It's a coldish night. I've been fixing telephone wires three miles above here. Most of the poles are trees," he went on, "and take time to climb." He smiled; and his smile, like his presence, filled the room.

I said nothing, but watched the fire-light on his strong face. His brown eyes held the glint of the fire, his thick-tossed hair caught the same warm gleam in the shadows. I smiled to

myself at musing over a stranger. And—wouldn't the Mater and Genevieve expire at my warming myself at the same fire with a lineman? I was sure Daddy would like him. He surprised my smile and soon we were chatting, unlike a lineman and a sister of Genevieve; I had forgotten even Daddy. It was new, hearing of views from tall pines, of scent of pine-flowers, of the wary old black bear on Bald Mountain across the river, the beaver-dam down at Butterfly Flat, the deer-lick up at the meadows. Were there such fascinating things in the world? Things I had never heard of—and I was educated, accomplished, graduated!

"Yes," I said eagerly, "I will go with you tomorrow to see the young grouse," when Daddy opened the door with beaming smile and a full basket.

"The old man hasn't forgotten his cunning, Olive," he called boyishly. "Come look."

The lineman rose. For a moment I doubted, yet I knew he would, he was so gentle of soul, and Daddy was old. The Beast of course was polite, respectful to age, but you knew that a dull knife could scrape off the very thin veneer of manner.

"Mr.—" I hesitated in introducing; we had never thought of names—the ways of wood-creatures had been of so much more moment.

"David Gard," he said simply.

Daddy put out his hand—I could have hugged him for that.

"Mine is John Vernon," he said.

"And this is my little Olive," he added, "as you doubtless have learned."

I thought I caught the words, "Olive Vernon," repeated low by David Gard—perhaps not. Daddy and he went to supper; I tagged after, and gathered that the lineman's work would require several days in the vicinity, and that afterward he might stay on for a short vacation. Daddy and he were deep in flies and lines, of which the young man knew nothing, but craved information and asked it deferentially of Daddy, pleasing his fisherman's pride. David Gard sought all knowledge, spurned none. Again the lion simile crept into

my mind; he was prowling on the outskirts, springing on knowledge, eager to devour. He was a trifle awkward in his table manners; I saw that he fidgeted and looked uneasy. Then his keen eyes took in every motion of Daddy.

After the meal they foregathered before the fire and talked. Dear old Daddy plays the listener so much at home that I never before knew how eloquent he could be. I sat by, quite disregarded, listening, a little put out that I no longer shared in his conversation. I shall not make my pronoun definite. You can guess as I tell my story. When we said good night the back-log was burned out. I held out my hand and it was quite lost in David Gard's huge grasp. He loomed bigger when he held open the door for Daddy and me to go to our cottage.

"A very interesting, intelligent young man, for his class," Daddy remarked to me as I kissed him good night.

"His class," my mind repeated the words dully. "Man primitive," I said to myself. "A class bigger, greater than of civilization's making." I counted the cracks in my board ceiling, through which moonlight trickled, until late in the night.

Next morning Daddy announced that it would "be Blue Cut for the day's tramp, a long one," and I was "to be good"; and he left me. Dear Daddy! how in a day years had rolled from him; his walk was springy. I hadn't heard of the People *versus* Brown once since we'd come; his talk was of shelving rocks, of knotted leaders and trout that he had struck and lost.

"Are you ready for the grouse?" I looked up from the book I was reading and the Baldwin I was munching under the tree. I had just managed a big bite from the apple and could not answer with dignity. I took his outstretched hand and was lifted to my feet. "It's rather a long walk," he said. How big he was, huger than in the house. Seemingly he filled out-doors.

His stride was long, but he waited

for me, going ahead in the narrow places of the trail to hold back switching branches. What treasures he turned aside to gather for me, red dogwood and jet cascara sagrada berries, heaps of things I didn't know, telling me about them till we reached a clump of tall, dried fern. He cautioned quiet, and we stooped and saw a covey of young grouse, a brood late in hatching, which scattered in alarm.

"We bring evident distress; shall we go on?" he asked.

Up we climbed. I asked him where he had learned so much.

"Much?" His surprise was genuine. "I know nothing at all. I've no education but odd bits. Of course everyone reads; I go to night school when I'm in the city, and scrape from it all I can. I belong to the people, Miss Olive Vernon." His tone I fancied challenged me.

"But you do know much—"

"I keep my eyes open," he said lightly. "My father was a poor country schoolmaster, my mother a farmer's daughter." I thought he held his head prouder. "They died when I was a very small boy. I've had to knock about for a living, and if you keep your eyes open you see a good deal. One thing I have not learned—you are city-bred and of the class—maybe you can tell me." He looked at me with frowning brows. I felt shriveled in the intensity of that gaze. "Why is it that a man cannot climb to your level without a golden staff? We lower ones," a slight sneer marked the words, making me indignant, "think as high thoughts, study as deep questions, stand your intellectual and spiritual equals, yet you do not take us in as one of you. What more do you require?" he demanded passionately.

"I don't—know," I faltered weakly.

"You don't know?" he repeated quickly. "It's your business to know, to stretch a welcoming hand to us below."

He strode ahead, frowning, and I stood stock-still in the trail, like a ninny, my brain groping confusedly for assurances that I knew were built upon

false premises. I did not speak; I could not lie to him. I thought of the Mater and Genevieve, the Beast—and this man. That he should aspire to their heights—the irony of it!—this splendid man primitive! I turned back down the trail alone; tears were near my eyes. The glorious world of an hour ago was gone; the sordidness of the world—my world—blotted out the freedom of the mountains. It was a sad world—and—

"Forgive me." A firm step joined mine. "I had no business to burden you—a stranger; I've wished to ask the question for a long time of one of you; my tongue ran away with my discretion. It was not worth spoiling a day for." He picked up a small stone and threw it at a pine branch. "Watch that rascally chipmunk; isn't he the epitome of freedom? What does he care for the society of bear and panther?"

His talk ran on of field and forest, but I could not forget the question, and meant to study it out.

Two weeks! I shall not tell of them, the memory is too precious for paper. The glamour of them will cling to me to the end of life, long as it may stretch, and the glow of their perfectness will light whatever of darkness the good Lord may send me. Two perfect weeks in a life! I can't tell you just what we did, what we said; we talked no more of equality of position; we found equality of soul. When I was tired he read verse of Lamartine to me; he had studied the language, dug it out bit by bit, with help at night school, and he loved the softness of the old verse; and I loved it. He read to me from old philosophers and from new; he talked of his theories, the brotherhood of man, of the relation of great thought to great ideals. I learned only him; he was a man. "Man primitive," I called him, and he laughed at the name. Dear old Daddy was as blind as a mole. Ever, up and down stream, his thoughts were of rifles, fish and old haunts. His heart was young again. He was purging his mind clean from office frets, and glad that I

was content in the mountains. Besides, he liked David, and at night enjoyed a friendly tilt over Schopenhauer, before the fire.

It was over—paradise can't last—and—David— We were going next day. The night was glorious, and we walked later than usual. Sudden dark overtook us under the trees; through the branches glowed big stars, and a curved thin moon tipped the tallest pine. The broad, luminous Milky Way, in that clear air, made light for our feet along the shadowed road, and we lingered. Incense of balsam rose about us and the river down the cañon sang with the sough of pine. My heart was knocking at my side like somebody waiting to be let in.

"Tomorrow?" he asked. I nodded. "Olive?"

"Yes, David." That was all.

I was a coward when we went in to the fire. How bravely his eyes shone! Daddy was waiting for me, a troubled look on his face.

"There is the packing, Olive," he said quietly, and did not glance at David who stood straight before him. I fled; I was a coward.

Mrs. Viles, dear, comfortable Martha Viles, brought supper to my room. I mumbled something about a headache. It was false—I was a coward—and something so fine and splendid had happened it dizzied my brain. Daddy was strange and grave when he came to me. Dear Daddy, I talked to him far into the night when he should have been sleeping. No pleas of not knowing the young man, of being *déclassé*, oil and water and such nonsense, shook me one instant. "Your mother—and Genevieve," was the last assault. Then I looked him full in the face.

"I will give up the whole world for David—even you, Daddy." I hated the hurt look in his eyes.

No one blessed us but Martha Viles. She beamed upon our romance when I told her. I was sure of her sympathy; we were only young things to her, not classified as species.

"We shall come back on our—" I whispered the last words when we left.

David saw us to the train. To me, his huge frame filled the world. If parting is sweet sorrow may I never know such sweetness again!

"I will follow next week," he told Daddy, "and work my way in the city, and make myself worthy of her."

"Worthy!" I laughed at the word, my big, splendid David! I slipped my hand into his—and Daddy turned away.

The days that came were black and bitter; you who have never crossed the Mater can never know how bitter. I had no one to lean upon, for Daddy was held in the iron of tradition, and was lukewarm in upholding me. I was the baby, but I suppose his dear heart was a trifle world-hardened, too. I could not make them see. They would not receive David. I was near distracted in those days, and forced to endure the Beast, who smirked at my mountain romance. Genevieve had taken the cruel tactic to laugh it away as a rare joke. I seldom saw David; he would not come to the house unwelcomed. My comfort was in his letters, where life and his heart were written unglossed by metaphors of convention. Soul was laid bare and complexities straightened; it was easy to read, easy to live by his rule. We both went to the little Anglican church at the foot of the hill, Father Grale's church, where the common people were comforted. There, after service, we had a few precious words together.

David was doing better at last, had a position in the telephone office and was studying for the profession he had chosen.

"We can live on my salary," he said to me. "Can you take the step down?"

"I will come up whenever you wish," I answered.

"I have spoken to Father Grale."

"You have taken much for granted," I began flippantly, "but it will save me from sitting next to the Beast at dinners," I finished lightly, but my voice trembled. Why do we fear to show feeling—smother it with frivolity—in the great moments of life! It's ever

so with women. David said never a word; I saw that he was deeply moved.

He came to the house for the first time and the Mater received him. He will never tell me of that scene. He had told Daddy that he would not take me secretly from the house. The man primitive wooed boldly, unafraid. "Deception comes from super-civilization," he said, and was not his way. He stated his plans, Daddy told me afterward, and made no requests.

Strange, that evening the Mater and Genevieve left me quite alone. I didn't know how hard my own people could be; it draws blood when you cut loose the tendrils of years. I had a little talk and cry with Daddy.

"You are sure, Olive, you are sure?" he asked.

Oh, the sorrow in his eyes! My heart—but I could not have lived without David. Daddy brought me a gift to help David to his wish, he said, and told me good-bye. I did not see the Mater nor Genevieve. I felt as if I were already dead in that house, and forgotten.

The night was long and fog drifted in toward morning, thick, clammy. At half-past five—the service was at six—I rose. The dark was smothering as a blanket; the electric street-lamps dimly shone, yellow balls under the muffling weight. I knew that David was waiting outside and I dressed with trembling fingers. Was it *my* wedding I was going to? How I longed for Daddy, the strength of his kindness that I had always known since I was a baby.

The long stairs creaked. "Like a thief in the night!" the words came to me as I stole out of my father's house, the hideous, great stone house that had grown hateful to me. The cold fog struck at me. Then—queer what silly things come to you in large moments—I thought of the wave in my hair straightening, and the feathers in my hat getting stringy. I stumbled on the slippery marble steps—it was the heaviest fog I had seen for years—the city was swathed, deadened in it. Through the thickness the fog-horn

of the fort wailed steadily. I stood on the lowest step, irresolute, the grim pile of the house back of me, the black fog in front. I pulled the fur closer about my throat and shivered. "Oh, Daddy!" I instinctively cried and turned back to the house.

Then David took my hand. Did the sun shine? I did not know, I did not care. Together we walked to the little church along the dripping pavement.

In the solemn morning hush we received communion together, kneeling side by side. The beautiful quiet of it! "This do in remembrance of Me." A feeling of holiness crowned joy, and lifted me to a higher plane.

After the few who were there had left the church, again we knelt together. "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?" rang through the empty church. In the moment's pause I could hear my heart beat; then Daddy came up the gloom of the aisle and took my hand. The comfort of his close grasp, the love in it! My eyes were blinded with happy tears.

At the church door Daddy wished us God-speed. "My son, take care of her," he said to David. What a wedding-gift to me!

Leaning on David's arm I went down the street. And now my story's only just begun.



THE CLOSING DOOR

By Rhoda Hero Dunn

WHY will you lock the garden door
That long swung wide for me?
I seek to enter in no more,
But do not turn the key.

I only ask to stand outside
And through the doorway see
That roses, as of old, abide
Where once you walked with me;

To see the happy lilies grow—
Ah! happy once were we!—
And watch the joyous hawthorn blow
Upon our trysting-tree.

So do not lock the door that is
The gate of heaven to me;
But leave a little space for bliss,
And throw away the key.

THE LADY OF THE HAIR-PINS*

By Mary Fenollosa

CHARACTERS

KODZUÈ (*a famous tea-house beauty*).

TORA (*Prince of Akizen*).

KATSURA (*a young girl from the country*).

SEN (*matron of the tea-house*).

YONÈ AND TSURU (*maid-servants to Kodzuè*).

TIME: *The Seventeenth Century.*

PLACE: *Yeddo, Japan.*

SCENE—A large upper-story room in a famous Tokio tea-house.

The wall, left, is composed entirely of sliding panels, called *shoji*, mere frameworks of wood on which are stretched translucent rice-paper sheets of a soft, yellow tone. By pushing aside one of these *shoji*-panels, one may look down directly into a city street. At centre-back is a shallow, square recess, called the *tokonoma*, on the floor of which stands a vase filled with flowers; and on the wall back of the flowers hangs a brilliant picture-scroll representing a tea-house beauty in splendid robes. At each side, right and left, of the *tokonoma*, are sliding wall-panels of gold paper, called *fusuma*. Near the corner of the room, right-back, is seen a little wooden railing, indicating the landing of a narrow, steep stairway from below. KODZUÈ is seated, front-centre, on a heap of square silk cushions, each of a different color. Before her is a black lacquered stand holding a round metal mirror. On the floor at her right is a beautiful smoking outfit, with bronze brazier, brocaded tobacco-pouch, long-stemmed pipe, etc., etc. On her left is a small tray with tea-pot, cups, and a dish of colored sweetmeats. She wears magnificent robes, much like

those of the girl in the hanging picture. They sweep out on the floor at each side, as she sits, Japanese fashion, on her feet. One of the maids, YONÈ, kneels beside her, pulling at the edges of the robe. Just behind KODZUÈ stands the other maid, TSURU. She is thrusting into the elaborate coiffure, one by one, great amber hair-pins that form a sort of halo behind KODZUÈ's head. KODZUÈ watches this putting in of the hair-pins with a face absolutely devoid of expression. She seems an ivory automaton, rather than a warm and living creature. As TSURU thrusts the last pin to its place, she stoops to the floor for a second mirror which, silently, she puts into her mistress's hands. KODZUÈ hesitates for an imperceptible instant, then silently takes it, looking at her coiffure from one side, then the other, then at the back.

YONÈ (*sitting back on her heels and clasping hands*)

Ma-a! The Sun-Goddess herself!

TSURU (*critically adjusting a pin*)

So she has been called by many a poet. One drowned himself last week for love of her.

YONÈ

And a fit ending for the presump-

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tuous fool! The lover of our shining lady is a prince.

TSURU (*turning her head toward shoji, left*)

Ah! Sounds of guests entering in at the gate. Surely it is too early for Prince Akizen!

YONÈ (*with smiling side-glance at her mistress*)

It would not be the first time he was early.

TSURU *runs to the shoji, left, and parts two of them, disclosing a narrow balcony without. She shows interest, and watches, with gestures, the scene below.*

TSURU

Ara! It is a half-drunken countryman, dragging in a girl.

YONÈ

More live-stock for Madame Sen to torture. But shut the shoji close, O Tsuru San. Spare our lady!

TSURU (*coming in and closing shoji*)

Oh, we all squeal and cry out at first. The new-comer will get used to it. And when she sees this radiant gracious lady whose princely lover is willing even to marry her—

KODZUÈ (*interrupting with a languid gesture*)

My pipe—fill and hand it me.

Both maid-servants reach out for the pipe, but at that instant a sudden confusion of sounds comes up from the room below. TSURU springs to her feet and runs to the stair-landing, peering down. YONÈ fills and gives the pipe. The piercing scream of a girl comes up the stairs. YONÈ covers her ears with both hands.

YONÈ

Poor thing! Poor, tortured soul!

TSURU

Ma-a-a! Such a time! Mother Sen pinches while the father beats. The girl has fallen.

KODZUÈ (*to YONÈ, in slow, emotionless voice*)

Order the strife to cease. It annoys.

YONÈ and TSURU (*together*)

Kashikomarimashita!

They hasten down the steps. KODZUÈ, when alone, turns her head a little, and shows interest. The sounds cease.

YONÈ *returns alone. She kneels before KODZUÈ and bows.*

YONÈ

O gracious one, the honorable strife has ceased at your command. Madame Sen, in return, implores of you a boon.

KODZUÈ

What may I do for her, who owns us all?

YONÈ

This, my dear lady—that you but allow her unruly new bargain to approach and gaze upon you to her fill.

KODZUÈ

An easy task for me, indeed. But to what end?

YONÈ

That, seeing you so happy and so beautiful, her terror of this, our life, may change to envious hope.

KODZUÈ (*smoking daintily*)

Is it a maiden from the country?

YONÈ

Yes, mistress, from far Chiku at the north.

KODZUÈ

From Chiku!

YONÈ

So said the father, an evil man to look upon. As to the maid, his daughter—but for her tears and tatter she'd be fair. Old Madame Sen was eager.

KODZUÈ

Her sale—is it accomplished?

YONÈ

Her father's sleeve sags low with gold. KODZUÈ (*in strange, intense voice, as if speaking to herself*)

So was I bartered for a sleeve of gold! I will not see her! Yes—stop, Yonè—yes, I will. But keep her back that I may not see her face at first. I like not tears and poverty.

YONÈ (*rising and starting toward steps*)

May only joyful things come near thee, lady.

KODZUÈ

My novel, there, before you go. And blow upon the coal; it has grown drowsy.

YONÈ *obeys, then descends the stairs swiftly. In a few moments she reappears, followed by a softly-stepping crowd. There is old MADAME SEN, a villainous-looking hag, who literally*

hauls after her a slender, cowering girl. TSURU pushes the girl from behind. Other heads are seen, and curious faces throng up the steps, but these MADAME SEN drives back with a fierce gesture of anger. KODZUE hears them coming but pretends oblivion in her book. SEN hurls the girl to the floor at back, then points toward KODZUE. Instantly the girl is fascinated and spell-bound.

SEN (to TSURU, grimly, speaking in a half-whisper)

Our charm works well.

GIRL (creeping nearer to KODZUE on hands and knees)

Is she always so beautiful and—so—still?

SEN (striking the girl in the face)

Don't creep so close to her. Back! She wishes not to touch a country lout like you.

At the girl's cry of pain, KODZUE has glanced around. She is seen to start, and control emotion. She returns, apparently, to her novel, but does not read. The girl is on her knees to SEN, pleading for freedom.

GIRL

Omadame, let me go! In Kwannon's name let me go out from here. My father tricked me—he said it was a friend of his that we should visit.

SEN

Tee-hee! Why not? I've met your drunken wood-chopper of a father before this day. (She casts a malicious side-glance at the motionless KODZUE.)

GIRL

I can hope nothing from my father—but you, madame, if you would, could save me. Let me return to my mountain village. The good priests and the nuns will help me. If you have given gold to my father, I will work hard, I will repay it. For each *oban* I will send to you two, though it should take my life long to do it. Only let me go out from here—the air is full of terror for me.

SEN (angry and menacing)

Shall I beat you more? Am I to burn you with my pipe? The bargain is finished and the gold paid out. You are as much my creature for the next ten years as was that dog I put to

death an hour ago for stealing. You will stay with me just ten years. After that you are free to go back to your mountain village—to your good priests and nuns. (Laughs maliciously.)

GIRL (sitting back on her heels, speaking quietly)

Then I shall find some way to kill myself.

TSURU

Oh, all of us say that at first.

YONÈ (in low tone)

And the fortunate are those who succeed in it.

SEN (to YONÈ, overhearing)

Fifty sharp blows you get for that remark—you discontented slut!

GIRL (in more controlled voice, to SEN)

Madame, had you never a daughter of your own? Is there no human pity anywhere in you?

SEN (with less mockery)

Listen, foolish one. You have an evil father. If I should hearken to your ravings, now, and let you go, he would but overtake and drag you back again. I know him and his kind.

GIRL

But if I reached the convent first, and told the Lady Abbess!

SEN

And think you that an abbess would ever give me back your price? She would expose me and your father, to bring us ruin. No, you must remain. The first terror will pass. Obey me in all things, and in time you will become happy and famous, even as yonder Incomparable One.

GIRL (looking earnestly at KODZUE)

You think she is a happy lady?

TSURU

She has a hundred different robes of silk.

YONÈ

The story of our lady's beauty is told everywhere. And I—I—love her dearly.

(YONÈ kneels and lifts a fold of the rich gown to her cheek. KODZUE glances toward her with the ghost of a smile.)

KODZUE (to YONÈ)

Tell Madame Sen to leave the child with me. I may relax her stubbornness.

SEN (*overhearing, and bustling forward*)

This is a boon, indeed, my Lady Akizen. Break in her wilfulness and you shall have an added holiday with six runners to your palanquin.

GIRL (*showing fear, and cowering behind Madame Sen*)

No—take me back to that dark room below, with you. I fear to be alone with her. I think her heart is dead!

KODZUE (*indifferently, with raised eyebrows*)

How quaint! Yes, leave her here with me, and should Lord Akizen arrive, detain him in the guest-room.

YONÉ AND TSURU (*together*)

Kashikomarimashita!

SEN, *after a second blow, drags the shivering girl around in front of KODZUE, and hurls her, face downward, to the mat. She speaks to KODZUE over the girl's prostrate body.*

SEN

Don't fear to deal too harshly with the fool. Burn her with that long pipe, if need be—but not the face—that would decrease her value.

(SEN goes, glancing backward and grinning.)

KODZUE (*to the girl, after long pause*)

You said your home was in the mountains?

GIRL (*without lifting face*)

Yes, lady; a small mountain village in far Chiku.

KODZUE

You wish to return to such a spot?

GIRL (*rising to her knees, and gradually lifting face*)

Oh, yes, indeed, for there the trees are tall and dark. Water is rushing always through the stillness. Birds are there, and great white lilies. And squirrels gather nuts and berries in the sun—

KODZUE (*interrupting with a weary gesture*)

Tell me this, girl. Why did you say my heart was dead?

GIRL

Forgive me, Augustness, I was rude.

KODZUE

Speak without fear. I have a fancy to hear your reason.

GIRL

Because, great lady, just now, as the

others talked and you sat there so still—your face seemed to be my mother's face—when the moonlight fell upon it—the night she—died. (*She covers her face.*)

KODZUE (*letting the long pipe fall unnoticed*)

Your mother—she is—dead?

GIRL

She is dead, she is dead! Or else I should be safe with her.

KODZUE

How long ago?

GIRL

Not quite two months. And I think that her heart, like yours, was dead before she died.

KODZUE

What was it, child, that put her living heart to death?

GIRL

GIRL (*hanging her head in shame*)
Her eldest one—my sister—who abandoned us.

KODZUE

Ah! And this sister—she was evil?

GIRL

Yes, lady—but so pretty. I can remember her a little, though I was very young. She was not different in looks from you, only her clothes were poor, and her skin tanned by the mountain—as mine is.

KODZUE

What led this evil one, your sister, in to doing a thing to break her mother's heart?

GIRL

Once, as a great reward for being good and diligent, my father took her on a journey to the city—to this same terrible, gray city. While there, she ran away from him.

KODZUE

She ran away—she left him of herself?

GIRL

And though he remained in the city for weeks and months, searching for her, he never found a trace.

KODZUE (*fighting down excitement*)

He told your mother that!—and she believed him! She never got the letters?

GIRL (*staring in wonder*)

The letters, lady? What letters?

KODZUÈ

Oh, merely any letters which such a girl, if not entirely bad, might wish to send a mother whom she adored.

GIRL

No letters, or no messages, ever came.

KODZUÈ

Then, of course, your mother believed her eldest child one of those evil girls who sin with their hearts.

GIRL

I do not think that she believed that way. She never would admit it to my father, although it angered him that she would not. I know she loved my sister always, and prayed for her. She taught me a prayer—

KODZUÈ

You still repeat that prayer?

GIRL

Yes, for I promised her. And I shall always say it, even in a place like this—each night before I sleep.

KODZUÈ (*pouring out tea and drinking feverishly*)

Well, have you more to tell—about this country mother?

GIRL

Not much, kind lady. The last words that her lips could speak were fashioned to a message for my sister. "If ever in this floating world you two should meet," she said, "tell in these words to your sister—"

KODZUÈ

Yes—yes—I am listening!

GIRL (*drawing back in fear at KODZUÈ's strange manner*)

I must not speak those words except to her.

Now KODZUÈ sits erect once more, and with desperate effort begins to calm herself. The girl is fumbling in the breast of her kimono, and draws out a small package, wrapped in faded purple silk. KODZUÈ's eyes show suffering and intense excitement, but she retains an appearance of self-control.

GIRL

This is the *ihai* of my mother, written with her Buddha-Name. The tiny image is of Kwannow the Merciful. She always wore it. It grew cold with her. Then, afterward, as she had bidden me, I took it from her breast be-

fore my father saw, and put it in my own. I am to carry it until I meet my sister.

KODZUÈ (*almost fainting, but stretching out a trembling hand*)

Here, give it. It is— You shrink from me? You think my touch pollution? Yes, you are right. Hide it back there in safety.

She puts her hand to her throat as if suffocating, then rises to her feet. This is difficult because of the many robes she wears. She makes her way to the shoji, left, and parts two panels, for fresh air.

GIRL

Lady—you are ill! Shall I call someone?

KODZUÈ

Be silent. Do not call.

GIRL

Oh, oh! I knew you were not happy!

KODZUÈ

Happy—in this life! Do as you threatened, child. If nothing else comes forth to save you, find for yourself the clean road to the Meido-land.

GIRL

My mother used to say that one might keep the heart pure, even in sin. The lotos-flower grows in the blackest slime! With you here in this house to befriend me, and with the memory of her words to keep me clean, perhaps I might remain—

KODZUÈ

It is your innocence that speaks. You shall not stay. This is a life to which the seven cycles of hell are bliss. You think my heart is dead? Oh, if it could but die! It is a little core of ice, here in my side! A cup of eating acid! A knot of poisonous vermin that never rest, but sting, and sting, and feed—

GIRL

How terrible—how terrible! If I could only help you.

KODZUÈ

Yes, if one can but help—if one could save a loved young sister from the living death—

GIRL

Hush, lady! Someone is on the steps. YONÈ runs in alone. Her face shows fear. She goes up to KODZUÈ, putting her arms about her.

YONÈ

My Lord has come, and I feel peril for you both. He wears the disguise of a wandering priest, and has but a single retainer.

KODZUÈ

This day is set with perils! And yet, last night, I dreamed of Fuji's cone.

YONÈ

And that should mean attainment of the highest good.

KODZUÈ

Perhaps that is what it meant. Go back to him, my Yonè. Remain till I clap three times, then bring him here, alone.

YONÈ (*pointing to girl*)

The maiden?

KODZUÈ

I'll keep her here that she may see, and envy me my love.

YONÈ goes. KODZUÈ glides over to girl, makes her rise, and begins deftly rearranging the disordered hair and garment. As she works she is talking, in feverish, disjointed sentences.

KODZUÈ

Yes, you shall see this love, and what love means to such a thing as I. My mother, once—oh, yes, you need not stare—I had a mother once who spoke to me of lotos-flowers and the black slime. Open the lower drawer of that cabinet and bring a collar of a lighter stuff. Is there a white one? That is good. Yes, lotos-flowers and mud she told me of—and for the first year in this hell of sin, I sinned not with my heart. No infamy can soil a self-protected soul! Then came the adored one! He, my Sun-God, visited this world of night. There, hand me the rouge-pot yonder. A touch on your white lips!

GIRL

What would you do with me, my lady? I am afraid!

KODZUÈ

Dare not shrink back from me! I have a plan to save you. Perhaps the Sun-God—

GIRL

The maids said he would marry you tomorrow—

KODZUÈ

Ah, but at what a price! Even now his family track him here—pursuing constantly with spies and threats. He'd marry me and gain, besides poverty and exile, perhaps even death.

GIRL

Would you not share his exile?

KODZUÈ

Exile! There could be none if he were there. No poverty or grief could touch me where he smiled. The double death, with him, would be my crown of life! But I'm not fit for it. He must not lose his life for such a painted toy. He comes here now, as Yonè said, disguised. That means some new edict against his visits—perhaps a personal order from the Shogun.

GIRL

The great Lord Shogun, ruler of this land?

KODZUÈ

Yes, for my lover's name is powerful. But you shall hear the truth from his own lips. (*Puts last touches to the girl's hair.*) Yes, that is better. Come, now, hide in here! (*She leads her toward fusuma doors, right.*) And make no sound until I summon you by name.

GIRL

Lady, I have not spoke my name to any here.

KODZUÈ (*thrusting her behind the door, and closing it*)

Do as I bid you.

KODZUÈ now goes to her pile of cushions, throws one out to floor near her, seats herself among the others and claps her hands thrice. From downstairs comes the long-drawn tea-house answer, "Haie-ie-ie-ie!" The head of a figure can now be seen coming up the stairs. He wears a great straw basket hat such as are used in Japan by beggars and wandering priests and outlaws for purposes of disguise. YONÈ follows this figure, but at the top of the steps he turns and motions her back. He comes out upon floor-level. KODZUÈ does not turn. He advances toward her, throwing down, as he comes, the basket hat and the long robe, revealing himself in the costume of a young nobleman. At his left side are the two swords of the samurai.

KODZUÈ *silently motions him to be seated on the cushion near her. He sits facing the wall where the young girl is concealed. He and KODZUÈ look long and silently into each other's faces. KODZUÈ speaks first, almost under her breath.*

KODZUÈ

My beloved, my beloved, the worst! Is it upon us?

PRINCE *(smiling sadly)*

Ay, Kodzuè. This is a world of shadows.

KODZUÈ

Your father has, at last, appealed directly to the Shogun?

PRINCE *(avoiding a direct answer)*

Had you but listened when I urged, we might have been even now far off in some strange, friendly land, caring for naught but that we were together.

KODZUÈ

You are of princely birth and have high calling. Our country needs such knights as you.

PRINCE

Yet to my country must I soon be lost.

KODZUÈ

What do you mean? The Shogun's edict? Tell me! What was the edict?

PRINCE

Either to give you up, my Kodzuè, or by tomorrow's sun— *(He checks himself by a gesture, and turns his eyes from KODZUÈ. The fusuma on the right parts an inch, and the girl gazes for a moment on the face of PRINCE AKIZEN. KODZUÈ is cowering.)*

KODZUÈ

Not death! They would not let you—die!

PRINCE

At least the Lord Shogun grants an honorable end—privacy, and self-slaying.

KODZUÈ

And do your parents accept this judgment?

PRINCE

They have never seen you, Kodzuè. They cannot understand. So they think it better for the family name that I should suffer penalty—

KODZUÈ

Yes—yes, I see. But you shall give me up!

PRINCE *(lifting his head and smiling at her)*

Not though the old gods spoke!

KODZUÈ *(in rising excitement)*

But I forbid such loyalty! I reject your love! Tora, I give you up! I am giving you up this instant. I do not love you, and I will not have your love.

PRINCE *(rising as she rises. He speaks with deep tenderness)*

You give me up, you flower! Can the sea give up the reflection of a star?

KODZUÈ

Don't touch me, don't come near me! I do not—

TORA, *for answer, springs toward her and seizes her in his arms. She is slight, frail, and cumbered with the heavy robes, and cannot escape him. At first she resists then gradually yields, sinking against him heavily and moaning.*

PRINCE

Ah, Kodzuè, sometimes I think it is as my mother says, thou art not mortal, but bred of the moon and the deep sea, and the white dragon of the storm. For thou dost run in my veins like fire, and my soul's eyes are blinded by the joy of thee. Shall we not live this one long night together, and when red morning carves in ebony that far hill-crest, shall we not die together, you and I—the double death of lovers? Ah, Kodzuè, Kodzuè, I know you well. You would not shrink from death with me.

KODZUÈ *(with closed eyes, whispering)*

Shrink from the ultimate boon! Yes, well you know me. *(Suddenly she pushes him from her and speaks in a different voice.)* But listen, Tora; there is a thing to do. We are not entirely alone.

PRINCE *(placing his hand on swords)*

What—not alone?

KODZUÈ

No, you shall see. *(Faces right, calls.)* Katsura, Katsura! come forth. *(To PRINCE.)* It is a maiden, a mere child, just bought by Sen from a drunken father. I wish to rescue her.

KATSURA *emerges timidly. The scout gradually fades from TORA's face.*

KATSURA looks timidly from him to KODZUÈ, and speaks to the latter.

KATSURA

You summoned me by name, Lady, though I had never—

KODZUÈ (*interrupting*)

Have you no manners? Down to your knees, girl! Make deep obeisance to Lord Akizen. (KATSURA kneels.)

PRINCE

The child is fair. Not unlike you, my Kodzuè, when first I saw you here. Such things are always piteous, and at another time I would bestir myself; but now, in these last precious hours of love—

KODZUÈ

Yes, she is fair and innocent. She wants to be good, my lord! She will seek death rather than live pollution in this place. Plead with Lord Tora, child. Tell him your heart.

KATSURA (*looking timidly, yet earnestly, into TORA's face*)

But you, too, Lord, are to die soon, you said. (*Turning to KODZUÈ and speaking with more passion.*) Oh, if he were my great lover, I would not let him die! Lady, there is a way. If you first—

KODZUÈ *interrupts angrily, leans forward and almost strikes the girl. Her face shows a new fear. Her voice, for the instant, grows shrill.*

KODZUÈ

You country fool! I asked not your advice! Plead for yourself while there is time! (*To PRINCE, in different tone.*) Yes, you will take her forth, you and your servant. The swords of both may be required. Here is the girl's full ransom, hidden away by me through all these years, as stealthily as any crow. (*She draws out a small brocaded bag from her breast.*)

KATSURA

But for your own release, was it not, Lady?

KODZUÈ

If so, Lord Akizen knows well I shall not need it now. Here, take the gold. Let the thing be done. I would acquire merit in the next life through this deed. (KATSURA hesitatingly takes the money.)

PRINCE

But where am I to take the child?

KATSURA (*again pleading*)

Oh, anywhere, great Lord, that is not here. Even to slay me with your sword. I am so fearful here.

KODZUÈ

Is there no shelter in your home?—no kindly maid-servant? Perhaps the old nurse, Metcha—

PRINCE

Yes, Metcha would care for her. But why not let her go to Metcha in the care of my servitor downstairs?

KATSURA (*cowering at his feet*)

No, I should fear to go alone with him. I fear everyone but you and this kind lady. Don't send me forth alone with your servant.

PRINCE (*turning toward KODZUÈ, and sighing*)

I sorely grudge the leaving of you, Kodzuè, even for an hour.

KODZUÈ

And I live only as I breathe your smile. But you will go, and place the child in safety. Then you'll return to poor Kodzuè. Until tomorrow's sun they will not harm my lover. There is much time between the now and that fiery ball of day. I will await you here—here—in this room—

PRINCE (*to KATSURA*)

Then rise, child. Let us start. I am in haste to go that I may come again.

KODZUÈ (*speaking half to herself, as if in delirium*)

And when he comes again a pledge of love he'll find—so deep a pledge that love itself might fear to drink! But he'll not fear—my Tora! No, he is great and strong! His country needs my lover—

PRINCE

What wild muttering is this?

KODZUÈ

A foolish woman's chatter, born of the peril of the hour. You will be satisfied, I promise, when you return. (*To KATSURA.*) Here, Katsura, take this cloak and wrap well in it. (*During the ensuing disjointed speech she is occupied first with wrapping KATSURA in a cloak of her own, giving her the*

money, etc., etc.) And, from the money, pay old Sen only the sum you cost. Keep well the rest of it for your own use. Be brave when they set upon you in the lower room. All is well with you if Tora is at hand. He is our Sun-God, Katsura, shining into this dark underworld of sin. You will look up to him and worship him always. (*Turns to TORA, then runs to him, assisting with his cloak, hat and swords.*) I will assist you with your coat, Lord—the last time in this life—the very last. That is a strange phrase and catches at one's heart. Well, I am eager to see you off, to have it over. Old Sen will rage like a trapped she-wolf!

PRINCE

You have taken the small dagger from my sword-hilt.

KODZUÈ (*trying to laugh and speak lightly*)

No one can deceive my lord. It is to protect myself in case old Sen—

PRINCE (*alarmed*)

I leave you to danger. I did not think of that!

KATSURA

Lady, I'd rather die than bring you harm.

KODZUÈ

Danger! There is no danger. With this dagger wrought in Tora's name, with the crest of the family upon its hilt, I feel the strength of the whole Shogun's army. She will not hurt me—I am, as yet, too valuable. Yet I would like to have a dagger in my hand. And for yourselves, fear not to use the swords downstairs! (PRINCE TORA, *still perplexed, walks toward the steps. As he pauses on the landing, KODZUÈ draws KATSURA forward for a few last words.*) Katsura, I have saved you. As to that lost relative of whom we were speaking—the evil sister—think no more of her and never speak her name. You are not to find her in this floating world. Such carrion die early.

KATSURA

If there were only something to do—some way to let you feel this gratitude that is choking at my throat! I may never see you again—

KODZUÈ (*vehemently*)

Never—do not attempt it! But there is a certain thing that you can do.

KATSURA

Oh, speak it!

KODZUÈ

To let me hold for an instant to my breast, that *ihai* of your mother's name—the little silver Kwannow that grew cold with her. I'll not pollute them now.

KATSURA (*delivering them eagerly, and then beginning to sob*)

You would add virtue, lady. Alas, if they were mine to give!

KODZUÈ (*pressing them against her bare breast*)

This is enough, and all I want. Here, take them back again. They are growing cold. (*She goes back to TORA.*) And now, farewell, thou dear one—thou who art loved as no man was loved before thee!

PRINCE

Kodzuè, you shiver. Your little hands are snow.

KODZUÈ

Nay, it is joy in thinking of our love.

PRINCE

I shall be back within the hour.

KODZUÈ

Say to the old nurse, "Guard the maiden well." You will be kind to her, my Tora—and watch a little over her. She wants to be a good woman. Help her to be good.

PRINCE

I'll charge old Metcha. She will remember my words and wishes, even after—

KODZUÈ (*interrupting*)

And now, indeed, farewell—

She pushes the two almost playfully toward the steps. As they descend she waves her hand, smiles and encourages them. The instant they are out of sight her expression changes. She crouches, listening to the sounds below. Angry voices are heard: SEN's shrill expostulations; the curses of a drunken man. Then a terrible cry, as of a death-wound, rings out. KODZUÈ staggers, puts her hand over her ears, and cries.

KODZUÈ

The father! Tora has slain him!

Heaven have mercy on that blackened soul! Namu Amida Butsu! Namu Amida Butsu!

She glides across room to shoji, left, tears them apart, and leans over balcony-rail, watching until KATSURA and the two men have passed safely down the street. As she turns back to the room, she takes the dagger from her belt, caressing it and smiling. YONÈ runs up the steps with frantic haste, flings herself to the floor, clutching KODZUÈ's knees, her face turned backward to the steps.

YONÈ

Try to flee, lady! Try to hide yourself! Old Sen is coming, red with the drunkard's blood. She blames you for the girl's escape.

KODZUÈ (*showing dagger*)

I shall be safe from her.

YONÈ (*misunderstanding*)

Many are coming—and we are but two.

KODZUÈ

I meant another sort of safety.

YONÈ (*quietly, after apprehending the truth*)

Then I shall come, too. I cannot live on here without you.

KODZUÈ (*embracing her tenderly*)

Yes, that will be best. Yes, follow me, dear Yonè. We two will go together, hand in hand, like friendly children, down the long road to the Meido-land. I must start just a little, first—but I shall wait for you. That much I know the Mercy of Buddha will permit. For you must wait to give the message—

YONÈ

The message, lady?

KODZUÈ

Yes, for the Belovèd, when he shall return. He thinks to die with me the double death of lovers. For they will slay him if he does not give me up. But I shall die to save him to himself, and to his country. Oh, I fear to die! But you will follow me, dear Yonè!

YONÈ (*sobbing*)

I'd follow through a thousand deaths,

and I have no fear. But he who loves you—what if he seeks to slay himself?

KODZUÈ

That is the thing for which you lag behind. You must plead passionately for that. Tell him that if he balks this deed of mine, my very soul will shun him in the Meido-land. Tell him that I have found in abnegation pardon and self-peace. He will not thwart this one frail blossom of my soul. Tell him to live because I ask it—to live for honor, and his country—and for—Katsura!

YONÈ

And who is Katsura?

A mob rushes up the stairs. YONÈ again clutches and embraces her mistress.

KODZUÈ (*poising dagger*)

I shall be ready.

YONÈ hides her face and moans. KODZUÈ strikes the dagger down into her heart. She totters and falls toward YONÈ, who catches her and lays the body out between the approaching crowd and herself. MADAME SEN leads. She brandishes a huge fish-knife. There are servants and brawlers with various weapons. They see KODZUÈ fall, and stop short. YONÈ folds her hands in an attitude of prayer and says distinctly:

YONÈ

Namu Amida Butsu. Namu Amida Butsu!

MADAME SEN (*beside herself with fury*)

The wench is dead! Again she's tricked me.

TSURU (*screaming with fear*)

She's dead in an act of will! Pray to her soul—pray—pray—I say, before her ghost has fastened on us!

The ruffians drop their weapons, fall to their knees, and begin to murmur the invocation. Last of all SEN, letting the fish-knife go, sinks unwillingly to her knees, raises her hands and babbles:

SEN

Namu Amida Butsu! Namu Amida Butsu!

(CURTAIN)



ALL'S well that ends swell.

HYLAS

By Madison Caweir

THE cuckoo-sorrel paints with pink
The green page of the meadowland,
Around a pool where thrushes drink
As from a hollowed hand.

A hill, long-haired with feathery grass,
Combed by the strong, incessant wind,
Looks down upon the pool's pale glass,
Like some old hag gone blind.

And on a forest gray of beech,
Reserved, mysterious, deep and wild,
That whispers to itself; its speech
Like some old man's turned child.

A forest where through something speaks
Authoritative things to man,
A something that o'er-awed the Greeks—
The universal Pan.

And through the forest falls a stream
Babbling of immemorial things—
The myth, that haunts it like a dream,
The god, that in it sings.

And here it was—when I was young—
Across this meadow, sorrel-stained,
To this green place where willows wrung
Wild hands, and beech-trees strained

Their mighty strength with winds of Spring
That clutched and tore the wild-witch hair
Of yon gaunt hill—I heard them sing,
The hylas, hidden there.

The slant gale played soft fugues of rain,
With interludes of sun between,
Where wildflowers wove a twinkling chain
Through mosses gray and green.

From every coigne of woodland peered
The starry eyes of Loveliness,
As reticently now she neared
Or stood in shy distress.

Then I remembered all the Past—
 The ancient ships, the unknown seas;
 And him, like some huge, knotted mast,
 My master, Herakles.

Again I saw the port, the wood
 Of Cyzicus; the landing there;
 The pool among the reeds; and, nude,
 The nymphs with long green hair,

That swarmed to clasp me when I stooped
 To that gray pool as clear as glass,
 And round my body wrapped and looped
 Their hair like water-grass.

Hylas, the Argonaut, the lad
 Beloved of Herakles, was I!
 Again with joy my heart grew sad,
 Dreaming on days gone by.

Again I felt the drowning pain,
 The kiss that slew me long ago;
 The dripping arms drew down again,
 And Love cried all its woe.

The new world vanished! 'Twas the old.
 Once more I knew the Mysian shore,
 The haunted pool, the wood, the cold
 Wild wind from sea and moor.

And then a voice went by; 'twas his,
 The Demigod's who sought me; but
 Cold mouths had closed mine with a kiss,
 And both mine eyes were shut. . . .

And had the hylas ceased to sing?—
 Or what?—For, lo! I stood again
 Between the hill and wood; and Spring
 Gazed at me through the rain.

And in her gaze I seemed to see
 This was a dream she'd dreamed, not I;
 A figment of a memory
 That I had felt go by.



LOOKING ON THE BRIGHT SIDE

WILLIS—I lost my friends when I lost my money.

WALLACE—Well, it's some consolation to know that your money was genuine.

THE FACE IN THE CRYSTAL

By Katharine Metcalf Roof

THE thing in Cecil Hardwick's face that, in Hester Farnesworth's belief, was the explanation of the adventure that ultimately befell him, was not discoverable at first glance. It lay, in fact, distinctly below the surface, a surface uncompromisingly regular and conventional. This fact may have been attributable to the uncommunicativeness of the Anglo-Saxon mask Hardwick had inherited from his British father, who had made a sudden romantic marriage with the daughter of an Italian artist. Or it might be, as Hester inclined to think, that Hardwick deliberately assumed the mask.

It was a fact that even people exceptionally endowed with perceptions experienced difficulty in identifying Hardwick with his work which, in odd contrast with his habits and his appearance, was startlingly individual. Indeed, in the field of art he had been accused of wilfully selecting the bizarre and eccentric, both in subject and treatment, thus belittling, so the more conservative of his critics felt, the real greatness of his gift. Others had publicly acclaimed Hardwick as the strongest man of the period, one destined to set his impress upon the art of the future.

In any case, whatever proportions Hardwick might assume viewed in the perspective of time, Hester Farnesworth, whose interest was frankly feminine and personal, announced it as her conviction that his pictures were Hardwick's outlet, the only one, so far as his friends and acquaintances knew, for the underlying current of romance to which he surely must have fallen

heir, since it had operated to bring him into being.

Hardwick not only, as everyone agreed, did not look like an artist, but it almost seemed as if he preferred the society of the philistine to that of his confrères. This again, Hester argued, might be the result of a lifelong attempt on Hardwick's part to resist his inherited romantic tendencies. For there was (as Hester pointed out when the other party in the conversation put forth an objection founded upon Hardwick's unflinching conventionality) "something about his eyes." The "something," whatever it was, seemed to elude analysis; yet the moment was sure to arrive—whether early or late in the acquaintance depended upon one's sensitiveness to impressions—when one realized that it was there.

It was upon the occasion of the Farnesworths' costume ball that a perception of Hardwick's intrinsic yet sublimated strangeness became almost universal. He had gone in a Francis the First costume ingeniously devised, like the other costumes, out of odds and ends of studio properties. It was not that, as Agnes, Hester's trivial younger sister, remarked, he was "too fair to be false"; it was the unmistakable atmosphere that he carried with him that struck everyone—even practical Billy Averill (whose work consisted principally of commemorative medallions). Hardwick was not, like the others, a masquerader. He was almost embarrassingly authentic. It placed, as Hester said, a gulf between them. One felt that modern subtleties and developments must be avoided. One should converse, Billy insisted, in "What ho's,"

"Prithee's" and "Methink's." Hester then definitely stated it as her conviction that some day Hardwick would "break loose." Just how she could not define, but, "You just wait and see," she assured Billy Averill, whomadejests of her prophecies, "for all his clothes and his manners and his hair-cut—there will be something different in his life. He is pre-ordained for some unusual fate."

"Such as," Billy queried, "automobile accident—morganatic marriage?"

Hester shook her head in scornful rejection of Billy's poverty of invention. "Disappearance—?" Billy offered and Hester nodded partial acceptance.

"More than that—disappearance of the Cecil we know. But you, Billy, are not capable of imagining the nature of the fate that unquestionably awaits Cecil Hardwick."

It was later in that same Winter that Billy, who certainly possessed no native taste for the occult, under Hester's insidious influence sent out invitations for a crystal-ball party, to be given in his studio. The crystal, he was able to assure his guests, was of distinguished Oriental associations. Innumerable prophetic visions had been revealed in its depths. It was the property of a Chicago sculptor, a young woman with a taste for the black art, who had recently come to New York bearing letters of introduction of a compelling nature to Billy, who had originally come out of the West himself.

Hardwick received the idea of the crystal ball with tolerant scorn, although, as Agnes remarked, like the operatic substitute, he "kindly consented to appear." Hardwick's scorn of the supernatural and the occult was not always tolerant. Indeed Hester had remarked that if it had not been for his European antecedents she would have believed him to have the blood of Salem witch persecutors in his veins, so virulent at times was the tone of his disapproval. She was a little surprised, therefore, when he appeared at the party, immaculate and correct in his evening-clothes, in rather marked contrast to the majority of the other men.

And when his turn came—still more to Hester's surprise—for she had been prepared to see him decline to participate—he went, with some mocking prelude, into the black-draped room which had been so arranged under the personal supervision of the owner of the ball as to create the best possible conditions for the inducement of psychic phenomena.

Up to that time nothing significant had been accomplished. Milly Blake, who was of a highly susceptible temperament, had reported a vision of such particularity and exuberance that all, with the exception of the owner of the crystal, regarded her account with suspicion. Another gazer, also feminine, described a peculiar appearance that refused to resolve itself into any recognizable shape.

"You did not look long enough," the amateur seer assured her, with a professional, almost clinical air. Then when Hardwick rose to take his turn she remarked after his departing figure, "He will see something, I know by the look in his eyes."

And Hardwick's face, when after a rather long absence he returned, certainly had an odd expression. Hester was the first to exclaim, "He saw something!"

Hardwick nodded, half smiling, to Hester's eye, trying to readjust his mask.

"Tell us, what was it?" came from all sides, and as he hesitated, Hester cried, "You must, you know. That is part of the game."

"Well, then," Hardwick seated himself beside Hester, "I saw a face."

"Male or female?" demanded Billy.

Hardwick laughed. "The obvious thing—a woman's face, of course."

"Someone you knew?" eagerly questioned Milly Blake, with the air of one recognizing the bond of supernatural powers.

Hardwick shook his head. To Hester's eye he had not yet entirely regained his poise. "No one I have ever seen or am ever likely to see."

"Explain more clearly," Billy ordered.

Hardwick laughed again. His manner, Hester decided, certainly had a touch of constraint. "She was not modern," he explained.

"We don't understand you," Hester objected.

Hardwick hesitated. "She did not seem to belong to any time or place. But she certainly was not of today."

"An old master," Billy suggested, and Hardwick looked up with an expression almost of relief, Hester thought.

"Very likely," he said. "Something I have seen sometime and forgotten." But as he said it he knew that what he had seen was not a thing that he could have forgotten.

"It was distinct?" Hester asked—as if she had diabolically divined his thought, Hardwick reflected. This quality of Hester's was almost an objection to her society. "Something you would recognize if you saw it again?"

"Unquestionably," Hardwick replied. "There was a sort of background behind her," he volunteered further, "Italian, I should say, like one of those old Venetian gardens." Then all at once he chose to laugh at the whole thing, to toss it aside, until he succeeded in creating a more or less general impression that he had been, as Agnes expressed it, "stuffing them." Hester, however, was convinced of the genuineness of Hardwick's vision and meditated upon it thereafter.

After that those who had not tested their occult powers took their turn, and though there were one or two obscure manifestations that the owner of the crystal characterized as "difficult to interpret," nothing was seen that could in any way compete with Hardwick's poetic vision.

One afternoon, the week after the party, Hardwick dropped in for a cup of tea with the Farnsworths, and found Hester alone. That subtle young woman then wrung from him the confession that he had actually visited the owner of the crystal ball in her studio, which he described as savoring more of the character of a temple of a priestess of the occult than

of a clay and plaster work-shop, and had looked again into the crystal and again had seen the face.

"It was the same?" Hester asked.

"If anything, more distinct," Hardwick recorded.

"What is she like? Can't you give me some idea?" Hester's tone was impersonal. Her greater attention seemed concentrated upon the alcohol flame under her tea-kettle. Hardwick fell into the trap. His eyes wandered to the window through which a misty New York composition of rooftops was visible, the twilight exaggeratedly blue by contrast with the lamplight within, and for the moment he seemed to forget Hester and think aloud.

"It has a curious, penetrating quality like a strain of Chopin. It is like a peculiar perfume. There is a slight, indescribable tilt of the eyelids, and the shapes of the shadows about them are haunting, full of mystery."

"Couldn't you paint it?" Hester suggested, when he had been silent so long that she had decided he was not likely to say any more. "Perhaps that is what it is for."

That brought Hardwick back. He looked suddenly conscious and a little shocked. "Perhaps I shall, sometime," he replied carelessly, and changed the subject. And Hester wisely forbore to bring it up again during the remainder of his visit.

Not long after that Hester discovered in her own way that Hardwick had purchased a crystal ball. He described it as the merest accident, a freak that had taken him suddenly at an auction of somebody's collection of Oriental objects, into which he had strolled on the chance of picking up a bargain for the studio.

Hester exhibited no excitement or tendency to chaff. On the contrary, she received this inadvertent bit of information entirely as a matter of course. "Have you begun to paint her yet," she inquired, without significant emphasis, "the lady of the crystal?"

"I made a try at it—just for fun, the other day," Hardwick replied,

"but she eluded me. I have a sort of feeling that she ought to be modeled. Her type suggests that, somehow."

"May I see the sketch?" Hester asked. Then she saw that she had ventured too far. What she described as the green curtain shut down in Hardwick's eyes.

"I destroyed it," he said, and again changed the subject.

That Spring, rather abruptly, his friends felt, Hardwick started off for a Southern trip, leaving behind a number of portrait orders. And there being nothing further to be gained from the use of more insidious methods, Hester remarked frankly, when taking farewell of him, "Let me know if you find the lady."

"The lady—" Hardwick seemed not to understand.

"The lady of the crystal, of course," Hester replied, and Hardwick looked the other way.

"Don't let your imagination run away with you, Essie," was all he said, and Hester replied,

"If only once yours would run away with you!"

"What then?" Hardwick laughed.

"Oh, I don't know exactly. But you are capable of some magnificent madness—I feel that. And some day it will overtake you in spite of your tailor and your face. Your doom is written in your eyes."

"I will hand my crystal ball over to you—you should go into the business," Hardwick retorted laughing.

But that night as he sat alone in a secluded corner of the deck he saw the face again. The smile—or was smile too definite a word?—the little look that seemed always about to pass, to change, tormented him with fruitless wondering. It was becoming an obsession, that face. Hardwick could scarcely have said whether it was to find or to escape it that he had set forth upon this pilgrimage.

II

He settled down in Venice—just why, he could not have said. It was

not that he chose it as a painting material, for it was one of his theories that Venice was too obvious, too ready-made for the brush. One should paint the thing that was hidden, Hardwick always proclaimed, not the thing that lay open to every amateur's eye. Venice was a place in which to drift, to dream—most of all a place in which to love. If Hardwick did not altogether manage to resist the impulse to drift and dream, nevertheless he did paint and he did not fall in love, in spite of the fact that Venice offered much available feminine material. He had brought with him a number of introductions, some of which he had presented, and he had found a number of American acquaintances stopping at the hotels. He accepted many of the invitations, being of a more or less gregarious habit, and it may have been that in that atmosphere of emotions and dreams the hidden self that Hester believed in came closer to the surface. At least the curtain must have been partially raised in Hardwick's eyes, for feminine admirers, obviously less addicted to psychologizing than Hester Farnsworth, described their expression as strange and indescribable.

One day he found in his mail an invitation to a masquerade ball, to be given at the palace of one Count Bottesini, a Venetian, whom he had met a few days before at Stephen Emory's studio. Emory spent a part of each year in Venice and had many friends among the Italians. Chancing to stroll in upon Hardwick that same afternoon, he persuaded him to go to the ball if only for the sake of seeing the old palace and the garden, which he considered one of the most beautiful in Venice. So, acting upon Emory's suggestion, Hardwick went then and there to a certain small magazine on a side canal, where an old man with a beautiful smile and a most sympathetic understanding offered him a seventeenth-century costume which, if it showed some obvious traces of having assisted at other such merry-makings, was yet a work of art in its way and chanced to fit Hardwick exactly.

It was with something more than his calculated—yet friendly—professional admiration that the shop-keeper exclaimed at the sight of Hardwick in this attire. And he muttered something in Italian under his breath that Hardwick did not catch.

"It is the portrait out of the frame!" the little old man exclaimed. He led Hardwick to a blurred mirror in a corner of the shop. "The signor can see for himself."

Hardwick, with a secret masculine sense of shame in the performance, barely glanced at his reflection; but the purveyor of costumes continued to stare curiously until Hardwick, remarking that he would take the costume, removed it. Even then the little old man continued to scrutinize him keenly between his graceful, obsequious farewells, until Hardwick had stepped into his waiting gondola and was borne from sight.

III

ABOUT the time that the average man after having lent himself to the frivolity of masquerade begins to find his costume uncomfortable and to wonder why he came, Hardwick withdrew from the harlequin throng and slipped out into the garden alone. He found an unoccupied stone seat in a corner of the garden, and sinking upon it with a sigh of relief pulled off his mask. He could hear the soft plash of the water in the canal below and between the cypress-trees the water broke into circling ripples of light under some gondolier's oar. The strong moonlight flooded the garden, catching here and there white edges and surfaces of marble, again blotting spaces into black unrevealing shadow. The tinkling music of mandolin and guitar drifted out from the lighted palace and the scent of jessamine mingled with the smell of the sea. Hardwick drew a long breath. "In such a night as this," he thought, then a second reflection in quotation marks came to him:

"Never the time and the place—"

Then he smiled at himself recalling quotations in the moonlight alone. About him was the Venetian night, the very atmosphere of love, but where was Jessica? Of the maskers with whom he had danced and trifled not one had piqued his curiosity sufficiently to inspire him with the desire to lift the mask. Hardwick wondered at himself idly. For if not weakly susceptible he had always felt the normal young man's interest in the unknown woman. If a fantastic passion for the face of his vision was the cause of his indifference, Hardwick did not admit it to himself. All the Anglo-Saxon in him was ashamed of the hold the chimerical fancy had obtained upon his imagination, quite as if it were some inherited predisposition to madness. Indeed, it was very much in that light that one-half of him regarded it.

As he rose, deciding that he had had enough of the festivity, he turned for a last look at the moonlit garden and then, suddenly, sharply, his eyes fell upon a marble bust that stood behind the stone seat where he had been sitting; a marble bust set upon a pedestal which brought the face a trifle below the level of his own, and the face—his heart gave a great leap—was the face he had seen in the crystal against the background of the Italian garden.

He knelt upon one knee on the marble seat, a hand upon either side of the slender, sculptured throat, and stared at the face. In the strong moonlight he could see that the marble was old and faintly marred. It was a century old at least—from the costume and subtler indications, considerably older. It did not exist then, in the flesh, the face of his inexplicable vision. It came to him with a little pang that, like the realization of an actual human loss, instinctively sought to prove its unreality. Then gradually a sort of trance-like oblivion stole over him, he lost all sense of the immediate, and the strange little stone face became the only fact in his consciousness. He realized nothing but the subtle tilt of the girl's eyelids, the elusive flicker of a smile about her lips. The thing had been wrought by

some man who loved her—that fact was recorded in the marble as unmistakably as the sure, subtle modeling of the mask.

He was aroused by the sound of a smothered cry, like an exclamation, in a woman's voice. He turned heavily like one wakened from a sound sleep and saw a girl in a costume of Titian's period standing quite near him staring at him. She was unmasked, like himself, and the full moonlight was upon her face. When he saw her, Hardwick cried out, then it came to him that he must be out of his senses, for the girl's face and that of the marble bust were the same. The same face, yet not the same expression, for he saw that the girl's eyes shrank from him with the recoil of a fear that was almost terror.

"Who are you?" cried Hardwick, and his voice sounded strangely in his own ears. He heard the girl's breath escape as if with the relief of some tension.

"I thought you were a ghost," she said. Then she contrived a little laugh. Hardwick scarcely noticed her strange remark.

"Who are you?" he repeated.

He waited, more than half expecting her to vanish, but after a moment she answered: "I am Bianca Bottesini, the daughter of the count."

Hardwick's instinctive resistance to the unaccountable reached toward reasonable explanation. "I don't understand. You have the face of the marble bust here, and it is a hundred years old, at least."

"Three hundred," the girl corrected. He realized, then, that she was speaking English, yet with some perceptible accent. "It is the likeness of one of my ancestors, Floria Bottesini. It is true that I resemble her. We have also her portrait. But her eyes were brown."

"And yours—" Hardwick moved nearer to her, and although her body seemed to shrink she did not step back.

"Are blue, signor. I had an English mother."

Then in a strange silence each stood looking at the other. The girl was the

first to speak. "And you, signor, are an Englishman, are you not—one of my father's guests?"

Hardwick bowed. "Half English and half Italian, like yourself. My name is Hardwick."

Then her suppressed agitation seemed to rise uncontrollably. "Tell me something—why were you staring like that at the face of Floria Bottesini as if—as if you knew her?"

"I have known her—a long time," Hardwick answered.

He saw her start and draw back from him. "But that is not possible."

Hardwick smiled. "I am not three hundred years old—yet I know her face. It is too impossible to tell—how I know."

He looked down into her upturned, wondering face and the beauty of it struck through him sharply so that he caught his breath and drew back, unconsciously folding his arms in the effort to crush down his rising emotion. As he did so, she exclaimed and covered her face with her hands, only to remove them the next moment and stare at him as at something she feared, yet was powerless to resist.

"Are you real?" she whispered.

Again Hardwick wondered if this were dream or waking. "Why should you doubt my reality?" he asked.

The girl threw out her hand with a little repressed movement full of intensity. "I will tell you. You are the image, the very image of a portrait in our gallery. The figure stands just as you stand now. The dress even seems the same."

"Oh, my costume," Hardwick recollected, with a glance down at his flowing robes. Then the strangeness of it struck him with a chill sense of its mystery. "Whose portrait—who is it?" he asked.

"An English artist. We do not know his name. They found the portrait when they tore down some walls at the time of my mother's marriage. I can show it to you in there."

Hardwick felt his grasp upon what he had called reality slipping. "Tell me about him."

The girl laid her hand upon the marble bust. "He made this."

Hardwick exclaimed. "And I am like him, and you—surely this is some strange dream!" Then as he moved nearer to her and felt the faint perfumed radiation of her warm presence he knew that the dream was inconceivably, inexplicably true.

Bianca continued softly: "Floria Bottesini loved him"—With a throb of the heart Hardwick recognized the little flicker of a smile about the lips. "Her father would not let her marry him, and one night he disappeared. They said the old count had him flung into the canal, but he may have escaped. No one knows. She never heard from him again. Old Assunta told me the story."

"She loved him," Hardwick repeated under his breath.

"So she kept his picture in a secret passage opening out from one of her rooms, Assunta says. She would never marry, and she looked at the picture every night until she died. And Assunta says there is surely some spell in the eyes, for I can never pass it without looking." Then as if fearing suddenly that she had confessed too much, Bianca drew back a little and dropped

her eyelids. Yes—even in the moonlight he could see the little tilted corners.

"It is so strange," Hardwick murmured. Then Bianca raised her eyes and he saw that they questioned him.

"But how could you have seen her face before?"

"With the eyes of my spirit," Hardwick replied. Then he felt the Venetian night vibrate with its fragrant meanings. He had only translated them imperfectly before. Now he understood. He let the beautiful, mysterious thing sweep over him, possess him, then he became conscious that she moved.

"Is it real?" she whispered.

"I begin to believe it is," Hardwick answered.

A strain of dance-music came out to them from the open windows and the bar of a song in a man's voice seemed to float over the water in the darkness. Hardwick put out his hands, then half withdrew them.

"I am afraid to touch you. You may vanish."

The moon slipped under a cloud, hiding her face, but he heard her voice.

"Do not be afraid," she said.



THE GREAT DEAD

By Archibald Sullivan

HOW soon the great dead are forgot! They lie
Learning far grander things, for they must know
The silent, gray-eyed mystery of rain,
And hear amid the dark the daisies grow.

They lie, not knowing how the world forgets,
Not caring for the idle feet that pass;
For God has much for the great dead to do,
Within His dusky city 'neath the grass.

AT THE HOUSE OF DREAMS

By Theodosia Garrison

“COME,” said Common Sense finally, “you must agree with me. You haven’t one sensible argument to advance in opposition. The thing to do is to turn the key in the door and come out into the world and all that is waiting for you there.”

“But I love it so!” said the Woman. She looked about the House of Dreams wistfully. “I have lived in it so long,” she said, “and so many days and nights went to the building of it, and there is not a room here that I have not been happy in. I let you come with me tonight just to show you how impossible it is for me to leave it.”

“Nonsense!” said Common Sense. “If you lived here constantly it might be a different matter, but the fact remains that your real life is spent in the hall bedroom of a lodging-house and bending over a desk that belongs to a man who wants to make life easier for you. It is as his emissary that I am here tonight.”

“Ah, but you don’t know *how* often I come here!” said the Woman. “I run away from the office a half-dozen times a day when we are not too busy, and, sometimes, when you might think I was hanging to a strap in a car or hurrying through the crowds at night, I am really here, here in this big, cozy chair, in the prettiest gown and slippers and with a little singing tea-kettle on the table. And afterwards we have so much to talk about and plan and laugh over.”

“We?” inquired Common Sense.

“The Master of the House and I, to be sure,” said the Woman. “I like to be here before him with the lamps

lighted and the fire blazing. It’s something to hear him open the gate and come hurrying up the path and in the door quite as eagerly as though it were the first time instead of the thousandth.”

“Indeed!” said Common Sense. “But outside of this house you will admit that you see him, say, five times a year, and then by accident and that you discuss subjects like the crowds in the Subway or the conditions of the weather for the simple reason that if you saw him oftener and spoke of things less impersonal, he knows and you know that his old mother and that crippled sister of his in the sanatorium could go to the poorhouse together while you two started housekeeping in a Harlem flat. You know very well that he will never ask you to marry him.”

“We often,” said the Woman, “speak of our wedding and the glorious Autumn days of our honeymooning. Will you believe me, it was in this very room that we were married and the little old minister I loved when I was a little girl came all the way back from heaven to marry us. You needn’t look surprised; even that is possible in a House of Dreams.”

“Ridiculous!” said Common Sense. “I have no patience with you. Now for the last time listen to reason. You are not a young woman and with a few more years of hard work and fatigue and semi-starvation you will no longer be even a pretty one, and here is a man who, if his reputation is a trifle dubious, is generous enough to want to give you everything in the world a woman can want to make her happy.

Gowns and jewels and the joy of life aren't offered to a woman every day, and all you have to do to possess them is to turn the key in the door of this house of yours and walk away."

"And leave it for the rains to beat on and the winds to tear?" said the Woman, but she no longer shook her head.

"Believe me," said Common Sense, "it will be utterly demolished in the time it takes you to select a tiara or decide what make of motor-car you prefer. And speaking of motor-cars, there is one waiting for us in the turn of the road outside—all red and varnished and shining and full of furs and cushions. I fancied it would be the quickest thing to get us away from here. Well, I am waiting."

"Oh, I dare say you are quite right," said the Woman wearily. "You are wisdom and I am moonshine. You are bound to convince me sooner or later. There was a poem I read once about a certain Manon who sold the keys of heaven at a vulgar rate. I dare say, after all, she was only a woman whom you tired out."

She rose and put her hand in the forceful grasp of Common Sense. "I will go with you," she said, "but take

me quickly. I won't stop to look about. Perhaps it would be folly to even lock the door, since no one can be mistress in a House of Dreams but the woman who builds it. But be quick, won't you?"

"I thought so," said Common Sense, grimly exultant.

She led the Woman through the rose-hung doorway. The door swung softly behind them, but there was no snap of the latch. Half-way to the gate the Woman paused with a sudden, detaining grasp on the sleeve of Common Sense.

"Hark!" she whispered. "Do you hear something?"

"No," said Common Sense shortly, "unless it is the motor-car puffing."

"Hu-sh!" motioned the Woman.

Suddenly she lifted her head, her eyes brilliant, her face at once amused and tender. "Well, upon my word!" she laughed.

She made a little running step toward the House of Dreams. "You had better go on," she called happily over her shoulder. "Don't wait for me. You might have known I couldn't leave the baby crying here alone."

Between herself and Common Sense the door of the House of Dreams closed with a decisive bang.



"DO you realize that we can go to Brooklyn in eight minutes?"

"That's no inducement."



THE HOSTESS—It's awfully good of you to come to my tea, Mr. Salter.

MR. SALTER—Don't mention it, I'm sure. I often go to affairs of this sort. It makes me so happy when I get home.

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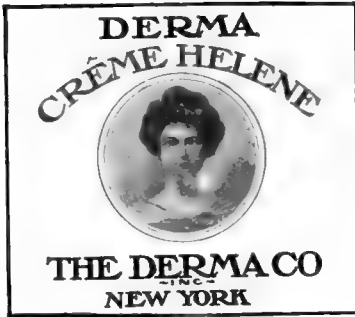
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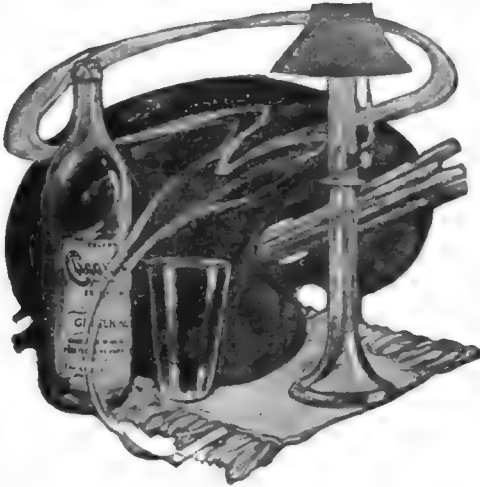
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Read What the Great Physician, Dr. M. W. Moran, Says

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to invest? Certainly they are giving Wall Street a fairly wide berth. The kings of finance have marched the prices up the hill and the natural thing to do unless they feel they can interest the great mass of the investing public, after they have succeeded in distributing a fair proportion of their holdings among the speculative element, is to march them down again so as to secure a more advantageous level from which to begin anew their aggressive bull tactics.

A Stock Market of Wide Fluctuations

is among the most likely things between now and election time. There is not going to be any persistent and long continued advance without wide bear swings as apprehensions grow acute over the possibilities of the count next November. Nor, in the event that poor earnings of the railroads and industrial concerns work together in the interest of the bears, is there going to be any such tremendous downward pitch as took place during the last half of 1907 without at least sharp and extensive rallies now and then due to the covering operations of frightened bears.

Wide Fluctuations Mean Handsome Fortunes

for those who are permitted to operate successfully in the market during the next four months.

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toxine that destroy the cells in the tubes in the kidneys." The Evening Post, one of the leading daily papers of Cincinnati, Ohio, hearing of Dr. Mott's success, asked if he would be willing to give a public test to demonstrate his faith in his treatment and prove its merit by treating five persons suffering from Bright's Disease and Diabetes, free of charge, the Post to select the cases.

Dr. Mott accepted the conditions, and twelve persons were selected. After a most critical chemical analysis and microscopic examination had been made, five out of the twelve were decided upon. These cases were placed under Dr. Mott's care and reports published each week in the Post. In three months all were discharged by Dr. Mott as cured. The persons treated gained their normal weight, strength and appetite and were able to resume their usual work. Anyone desiring to read the details of this public test can obtain copies by sending to Dr. Mott for them.

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A Criticism

if it is offered sincerely is of inestimable value. An impression has gained ground that THE SMART SET has published and is publishing only stories dealing with a certain aspect of society. Nothing could be more untrue. The aim of the magazine has always been to print the best fiction of the widest possible variety that could be procured; yet we have never hesitated, when the opportunity offered, to publish a story that dealt with the deeper side of life, or with life in its unpleasant phases. We do not believe it is unjust to say that if writers like de Maupassant, Poe and Balzac were living today, THE SMART SET would be the only magazine that would have the courage to print their work. We published "The Mona Lisa," by Vance Thompson. No other periodical, we think, would have done so; yet that single story brought us more letters from thoughtful readers than anything that has appeared in our pages. We also published a novel called "Simeon Tetlow's Shadow," by Jennette Lee—a story utterly different in character—and this, too, brought us many letters of congratulation. Read what follows and then tell us honestly if you agree with the writer. It seems to us that there is food for thought in this communication. We would like to have *your* opinion, *your* advice. Write us today, so that we may consider the matter from every standpoint.

THE PARK CHURCH,
ELMIRA, N. Y., March 19, 1908.

To the Editor of The Smart Set:

I have read by chance a story in the March number of your magazine which seems to me to be a modern Dickens tale—and an improvement in many respects upon its prototype, "The Christmas Carol." It is called "Simeon Tetlow's Shadow" and should have a wide reading. After reading that I explored the rest of the magazine and found many stories of merit—and nothing objectionable.

I am moved by this experience to write to you regarding the name and cover page of the publication. Why should so much good writing bear the handicap of so misleading an exterior? It may be that the smart set read such stories as the one I have mentioned, but I doubt whether many of them would read or appreciate it, while hundreds of persons will miss seeing it, to whom it would appeal most strongly. "Simeon Tetlow's Shadow" is more than clever; the magazine that commands such talent should, it seems to me, have a broader aim than the amusing of the smart set. Would it not be worth while to consider a change of name to fit the nature?

I am sincerely,

A new friend of The Smart Set,

(Rev.) ANNIS F. EASTMAN.

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